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MEMORANDUM REPORT ARBRL-MR-03277

MULTIPHASE FLOW ANALYSIS OF THE BALLISTIC
PERFORMANCE OF AN ANOMALOUS LOVA
PROPELLANT MIX

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER MEMORANDUM REPORT ARBRL-MR-03277	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) MULTIPHASE FLOW ANALYSIS OF THE BALLISTIC PERFORMANCE OF AN ANOMALOUS LOVA PROPELLANT MIX		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Memorandum Report July-October 1982
7. AUTHOR(s) Albert W. Horst		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS US Army Ballistic Research Laboratory ATTN: DRDAR-BLI Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD 21005		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS US Army Armament Research and Development Command US Army Ballistic Research Laboratory (DRDAR-BLA-S) Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD 21005		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS 1L161102AH43
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		12. REPORT DATE June 1983
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 61
		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) UNCLASSIFIED
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution unlimited		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Interior Ballistics Computer Codes Guns NOVA Pressure Waves Gun Propellants Flamespread LOVA		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) mb Low-vulnerability (LOVA) gun propellants offer an attractive approach to the reduction of the probability of catastrophic kill of armored weapon systems resulting from the initiation of on-board ammunition. The particular attributes of LOVA propellants which contribute to the desired impact on vulnerability include reduced ignitability and decreased burning rates at low pressures. These same characteristics, however, may influence other aspects of the ballistic cycle, unintended and unexpected by the propellant/charge		

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designer. In this paper, the interplay of these various features is investigated, specifically in respect to the anomalous ballistic performance of a particular LOVA propellant mix, by means of a two-phase flow interior ballistic code (NOVA), and the potential impact on gun performance is discussed.

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I. INTRODUCTION

For several years now the US Army and Navy have been working jointly on a program to develop low vulnerability (LOVA) gun propellants. This effort was undertaken in response to the need to reduce the catastrophic kill of armored weapons systems by damage-inflicted initiation of on-board ammunition. The result has been development of a family of LOVA propellants, generally consisting of a nitramine (RDX or HMX) dispersed in an inert binder matrix. These formulations are characterized by an impetus level of 970 to 1100 J/g, with flame temperatures from 2280 to 2800 K. Ignition temperatures, according to conductive ignition tests, are in the range of 600 to 1300 K, and burning rate exponents are typically reported to be just in excess of unity. Documentation abounds on the LOVA program, and the reader is directed to the references for a more complete discussion of this major research and development effort and its accomplishments.^{1,2}

The reduction in vulnerability offered by LOVA propellants can, in general, be associated with two characteristics of these formulations. Primarily, a higher threshold for thermal ignition reduces the likelihood of inadvertent initiation, or at least delays its onset and reduces the rate of subsequent flamespread. In addition, lower burning rates at low pressures reduce local pressurization rates, again likely slowing flamespread, perhaps even eliminating conditions which might otherwise contribute to the transfer of ignition among stored ammunition components.

Some of these same features, however, may have impact on various aspects of the interior ballistic cycle beyond that of ignition. For instance, the reduction in burning rates at low pressures is most often accompanied by some increase in the sensitivity of burning rate to pressure, manifested in a burning rate pressure exponent in excess of unity. Classical ballistic considerations suggest that this should result in a small overall increase in ballistic variability,³ an effect which indeed has been noted during some LOVA gun firings. Further, it has been noted that, while development efforts to date have been directed towards tank guns, low-pressure ignition and combustion characteristics exhibited by LOVA propellants may pose considerable

¹S. Wise and J.J. Rocchio, "Binder Requirements for Low Vulnerability Propellants," 18th JANNAF Combustion Meeting, CPIA Publication 347, Vol. II, pp. 305-320, October 1981.

²R.W. Deas, G.E. Keller, and J.J. Rocchio, "The Interior Ballistic Performance of Low Vulnerability Ammunition (LOVA)," 1981 JANNAF Propulsion Meeting, CPIA Publication 340, Vol. III, pp. 437-477, May 1981.

³A.C. Haukland and W.M. Burnett, "Sensitivity of Interior Ballistic Performance to Propellant Thermochemical Parameters," Proceedings of the Tri-Service Gun Propellant Symposium, Vol. I, pp. 7.3-1 - 7.3-11, Picatinny Arsenal, Dover, NJ, October 1972.

difficulties to the designer of zoned, artillery charges.⁴ In this study, however, we will limit ourselves to the influence of these features on multiphase flow processes, including ignition and flamespread, in the tank gun configuration currently of interest.

II. DISCUSSION

A. Background

Let us begin with a brief review of multiphase flow processes typically occurring in conventional, high-performance propelling charges employing granular propellant. The sequence of events begins with a local ignition stimulus of hot gases and/or particles, which for tank ammunition employing a high-pressure bayonet primer, results in ignition of adjacent propellant grains in just a few milliseconds. Combustion products from the burning grains join those from the igniter, penetrating the remainder of the propellant bed and leading to convectively driven flame propagation throughout the entire propellant charge. Concurrently, interphase drag may lead to local bed compaction, which is similarly transmitted through the propellant aggregate, and motion, with possible impact of individual grains against the projectile base or breech face. Stagnation and reflection of the gas pressure wave associated with the ignition front at these same boundaries increase local pressures and hence local propellant burning rates. This situation may be further exacerbated by a reduction in local free volume if bed compaction is present or by additional burning surface if grain fracture has occurred.

Tank ammunition has often been considered relatively immune to the vigorous multiphase flow dynamics described above because of the nearly uniform, distributed igniter output provided by bayonet primers and immobility of the propellant bed in a nearly full cartridge case. Recent years, however, have seen more and more tank ammunition configurations with long projectile boattails extending deep into the propellant bed, preventing use of the traditional long, bayonet primer. Moreover, the tapered portion of the boattail provides a region of changing cross-sectional area which could serve to focus gas pressure waves and perhaps easily distort incoming propellant grains to the point of fracture.

The study reported herein was motivated by the results from a series of firings in a 105-mm, M68 Tank Gun performed to evaluate the ballistic performance of a particular LOVA formulation (CAB/ATEC/RDX, Mix 1453). Substantial variations in maximum chamber pressure were observed; further, maximum chamber pressure was seen to increase with increasing levels of pressure waves, as measured in terms of the initial reverse pressure difference between breech and forward ends of the gun chamber. (See Figure 1 and Appendix A.) This relationship between pressure waves and maximum chamber pressure is well

⁴T.C. Minor and A.W. Horst, "Some Experimental Methods for the Study of Two-Phase Flow in LOVA Artillery Charges," *Internationale Jahrestagung, ICT*, Karlsruhe, Germany, June 1982.

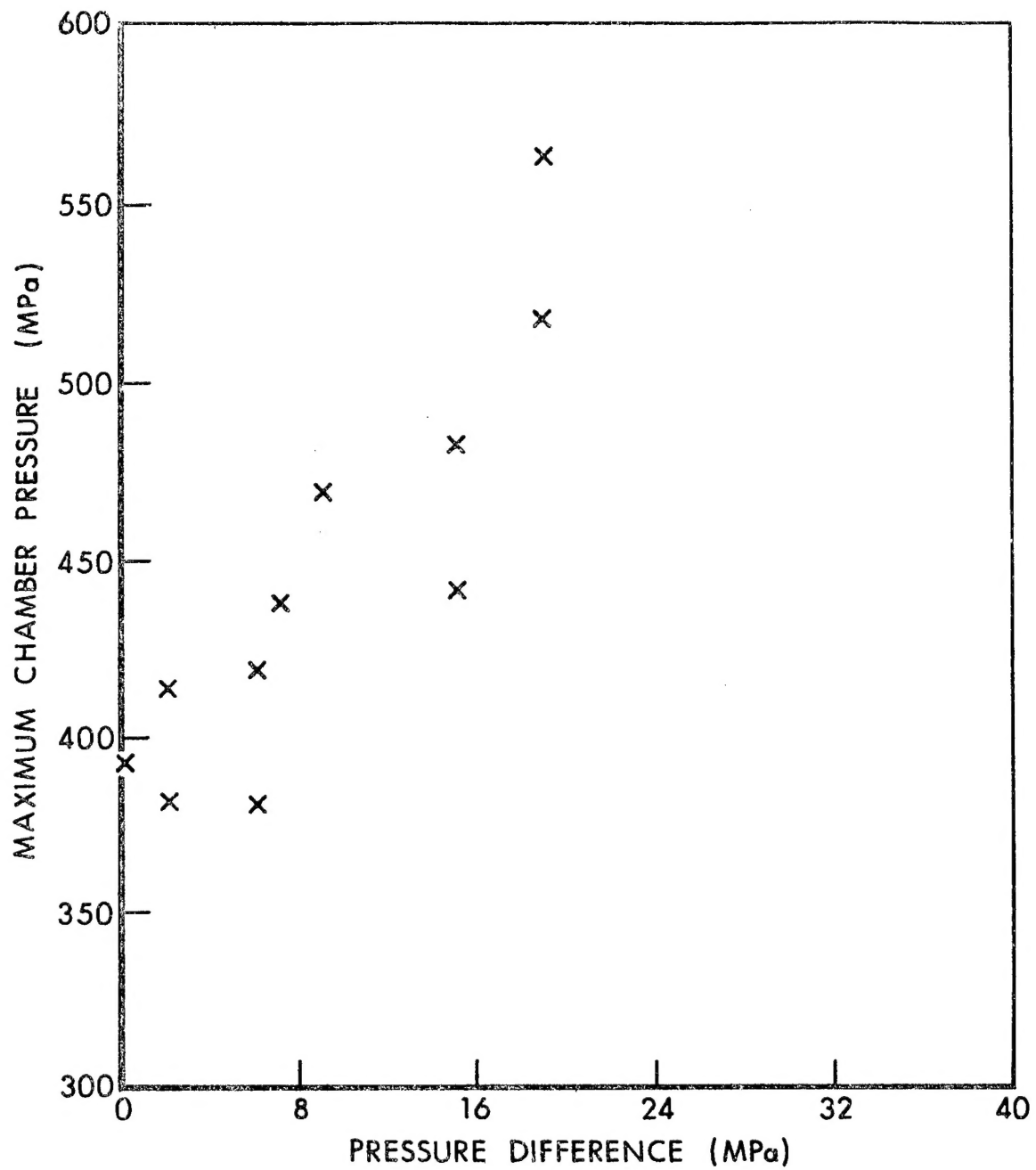


Figure 1. Maximum Chamber Pressure Versus Initial Reverse Pressure Difference, Experimental

documented for artillery charges,⁵ where variations in igniter stimulus and propellant/chamber interface are readily available to excite strong, longitudinal pressure waves leading to grain fracture, but a similar exhibition by tank ammunition, supposedly free from such variables, requires that comparable yet unknown mechanisms be operative. This work was thus undertaken to identify any such mechanisms and to ensure their absence in developmental propelling charges employing candidate LOVA propellants.

B. Analysis

The analysis was performed using the NOVA code,⁶ a two-phase, unsteady flow representation of the interior ballistic cycle. The balance equations describe the evolution of macroscopic flow properties accompanying changes in mass, momentum, and energy arising out of interactions associated with combustion, interphase drag, and heat transfer. Functioning of the igniter is included by specifying a predetermined mass injection rate as a function of position and time. Flamespread then follows from axial convection, with grain surface temperature deduced from a heat transfer correlation and the unsteady heat conduction equation, and ignition based on a surface temperature criterion. The NOVA code provides a one-dimensional (with area change) representation of flow, necessitating some compromise in configurational aspects of the problem, as depicted in Figure 2. It was felt, however, that this limitation would not seriously degrade the essential feature of the study - assessing the ballistic influence of propellant characteristics unique to the LOVA family. If results warranted further attention to the problem, a somewhat more costly two-dimensional analysis could be performed using the TDNOVA code.⁷

A baseline NOVA calculation for the 105-mm, M68 Tank Gun firing the M456 Cartridge loaded with 5.76 kg of LOVA propellant (CAB/ATEC/RDX, Mix 1453) was performed using input data displayed in Table 1. A predicted maximum chamber pressure of about 450 MPa, obtained with no attempt to manipulate barrel resistance or burning rate data for refinement of the calculation, falls comfortably in the range of values shown in Figure 1. Further, the predicted structure of pressure versus time and pressure-difference versus time profiles is in surprisingly good agreement with experimental data recorded for one of the rounds exhibiting a relatively low level of pressure waves. (See Figure 3.)

Calculations were then performed to determine the role played in characterization of the ballistic environment by those particular inputs exhibiting

⁵A.W. Horst, I.W. May, and E.V. Clarke, "The Missing Link Between Pressure Waves and Breechblows," ARBRL-MR-02849, USA ARRADCOM, Ballistic Research Laboratory, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD, July 1978 (AD A058354).

⁶P.S. Gough, "The NOVA Code: A User's Manual. Volume 1. Description and Use," IHCR 80-8, Naval Ordnance Station, Indian Head, MD, December 1980.

⁷P.S. Gough, "A Two-Dimensional Model of the Interior Ballistics of Bagged Artillery Charges," ARBRL-CR-00452, USA ARRADCOM, Ballistic Research Laboratory, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD, April 1981 (AD A100751).

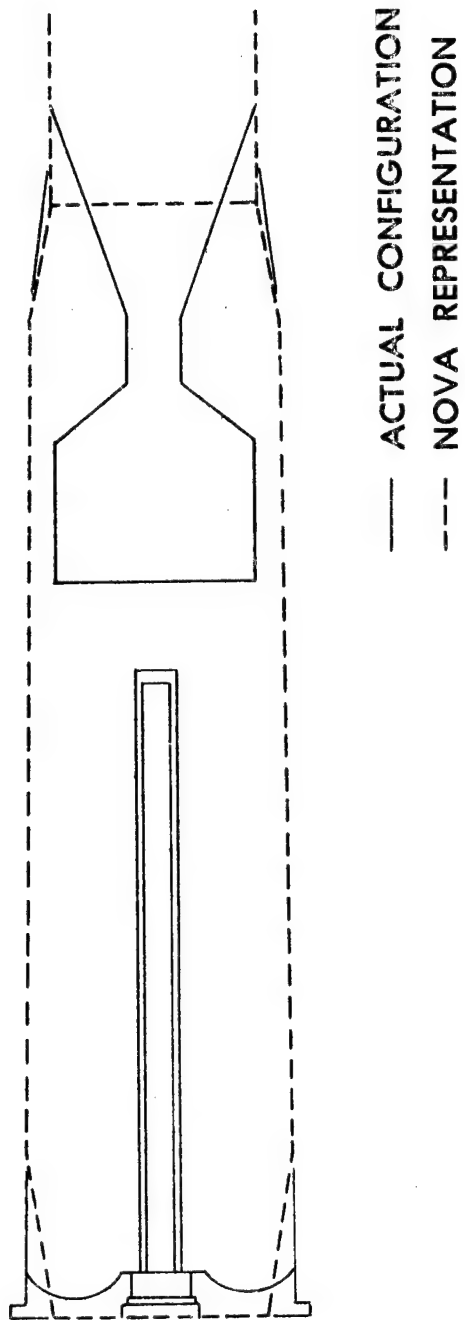


Figure 2. Actual Ammunition/Tube Interface and NOVA Code Representation

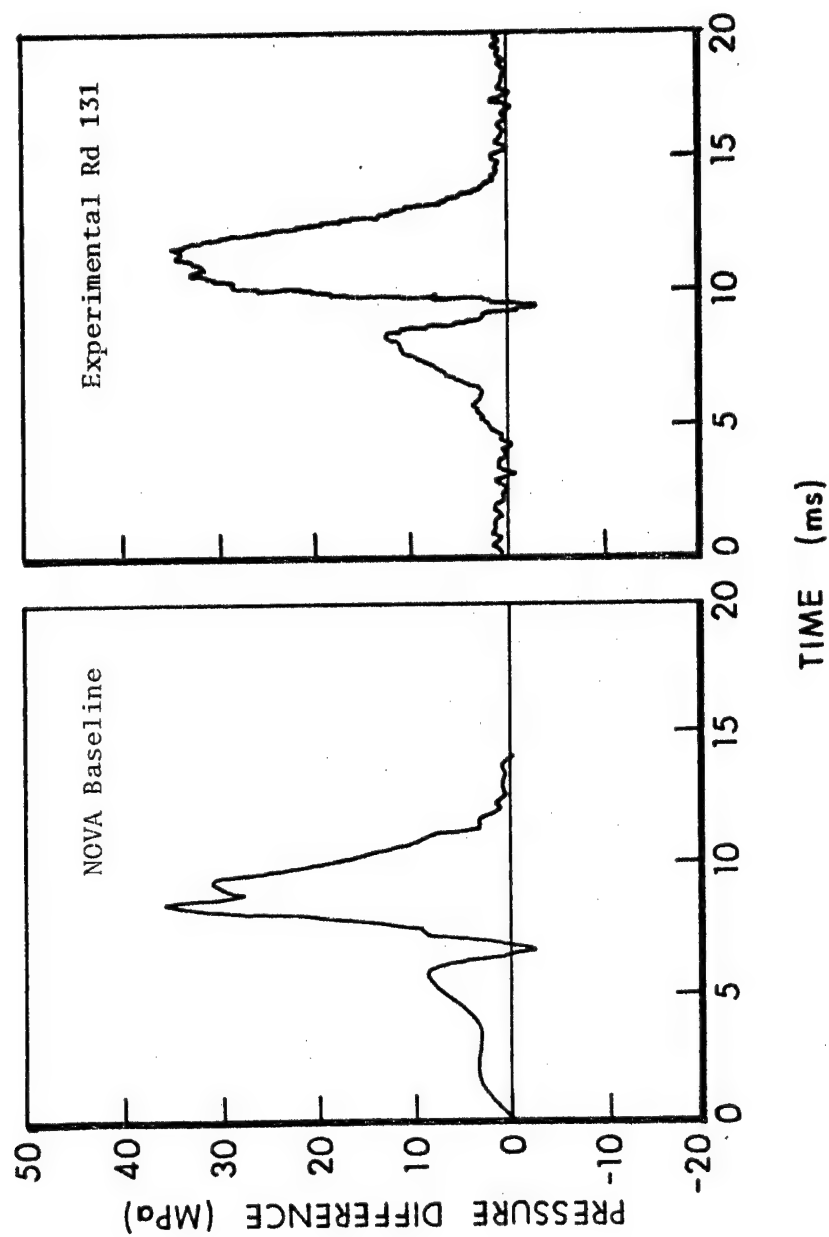


Figure 3. Comparison of Calculated and Experimental Pressure-Difference Profiles

TABLE 1. PROPELLANT INPUT DATA

PROPELLANT TYPE	CAB/ATEC/RDX
MASS OF PROPELLANT (kg)	5.76
DENSITY OF PROPELLANT (g/cm^3)	1.58
OUTSIDE DIAMETER (mm)	4.39
PERFORATION DIAMETER (mm)	0.28
LENGTH (mm)	6.50
NUMBER OF PERFORATIONS	7
SPEED OF COMPRESSION WAVE IN SETTLED BED (m/s)	152.
SPEED OF EXPANSION WAVE (m/s)	1270.
BURNING RATE COEFFICIENT ($\text{cm}/\text{s} \cdot \text{MPa}^{\text{EXP}}$)	0.02573
BURNING RATE EXPONENT	1.05
BURNING RATE ADDITIVE CONSTANT	0.
IGNITION TEMPERATURE (K)	611.
THERMAL CONDUCTIVITY ($\text{J}/\text{cm} \cdot \text{s} \cdot \text{K}$)	0.00222
THERMAL DIFFUSIVITY (cm^2/s)	0.0008677
EMISSIVITY FACTOR	0.6
CHEMICAL ENERGY RELEASED IN BURNING (J/g)	3716.
MOLECULAR WEIGHT (g/gmol)	20.22
RATIO OF SPECIFIC HEATS	1.275
COVOLUME (cm^3/g)	1.19

values largely unique to LOVA propellants. Specifically addressed were burning rates and ignition temperatures, for reasons previously discussed, and propellant rheology, largely uncharacterized for this family of propellants. In addition, the influence of igniter profiles reflecting increasing levels of local base ignition was studied, as was the sensitivity of results to projectile engraving pressure.

Of immediate notice is the substantial variation in predicted performance observed to accompany selected modifications to the input data base. Treating the less intriguing results first, we note in Table 2 a relatively small and qualitatively reasonable influence of propellant bed rheology as reflected in the speed of compression waves in the settled bed. The slightly stiffer bed of the modified data base led to less bed compaction at stagnation and a slight reduction in the level of predicted pressure waves. However, the influence of engraving pressure on maximum chamber pressure and muzzle velocity was quite large, though there was surprisingly little impact on predicted pressure-wave level. Indeed, a somewhat more conscientious study of the pressure-difference versus time profiles revealed very similar pressure waves superimposed with little coupling on quite disparate overall chamber-pressure levels associated with differences in projectile motion. (A complete set of all pressure-difference profiles calculated using the NOVA code during the course of this study is included as Appendix B.)

A totally unexpected result was the strong influence of ignition temperature on calculated results shown in Table 3. Realizing that the use of a surface-temperature ignition criterion represents quite a simplification of nature, particularly in the highly transient gun environment, we wish to de-

TABLE 2. SUMMARY OF CALCULATED RESULTS - BASELINE

STUDY PARAMETER	MAX PRESS (MPa)	MUZ VELOCITY (m/s)	DIFF PRESS (MPa)
Baseline (Table 1)	447	1211	3
Speed of Compression Wave = 254 m/s	441	1207	0
Engraving Pressure = 21 MPa (34 MPa baseline)	372	1154	3
Engraving Pressure = 48 MPa	498	1241	1

emphasize the importance of the actual input values employed in the study. Nevertheless, the fact that the range of ignition temperatures studied exerted an influence on predicted pressures, velocities, and pressure waves alike suggests that this aspect of LOVA propellants may be playing a role of ballistic consequence beyond the intended reduction in vulnerability. Again, the important parameters here seem to be just how much propellant is burning at what pressures and associated burning rates before the projectile experiences significant travel.

TABLE 3. SUMMARY OF CALCULATED RESULTS - IGNITION TEMPERATURE

STUDY PARAMETER	MAX PRESS (MPa)	MUZ VELOCITY (m/s)	DIFF PRESS (MPa)
Baseline (Table 1)	447	1211	3
Ignition Temp = 444 K	372	1159	18
Ignition Temp = 528 K	386	1170	12
Ignition Temp = 694 K	--- propellant did not ignite ---		

Remaining for the moment with the topic of ignition, we note in Table 4 that increased levels of localized, base ignition of the propellant charge are predicted, as expected, to lead to an increase in the magnitude of pressure

TABLE 4. SUMMARY OF CALCULATED RESULTS - IGNITER PROFILE

STUDY PARAMETER	MAX PRESS (MPa)	MUZ VELOCITY (m/s)	DIFF PRESS (MPa)
Baseline (Table 1)	447	1211	3
Base/Forward Igniter Output Ratio = 2 (Baseline = 1)	419	1189	8
Base/Forward Igniter Output Ratio = 3	372	1150	9

waves. However, unlike the experimental data of Figure 1, a reduction, rather than an increase, in maximum chamber pressure is seen to accompany this trend. We will return to this disconcerting result shortly.

An earlier study ⁸ documented the predicted influence of burning rate representation on predicted pressure waves in a Navy 5-Inch/54-Caliber Gun. When the burning rate exponent is reduced and the coefficient correspondingly increased to maintain overall ballistic levels in a particular gun environment, low pressure burning rates are seen to increase, most often increasing pressure-wave levels as well. On the other hand, as seen in the results of the current study (Table 5), increasing the exponent and decreasing the coefficient in a similar fashion may so reduce low pressure burning rates that the flame does not propagate if only a small portion of the propellant bed is ignited directly by the primer. Additional results were obtained here by simultaneously reducing the ignition temperature to increase the size of this region ignited by the primer. The strong link between burning rate and pressure waves previously documented was then reproduced, though we must note that the accompanying trend in maximum chamber pressure is unfortunately more a result of our scheme for selecting burning rate coefficients than an expression of the correct physical relationship between maximum pressure and pressure waves.

TABLE 5. SUMMARY OF CALCULATED RESULTS - BURNING RATE EXPONENT

STUDY PARAMETER	MAX PRESS (MPa)	MUZ VELOCITY (m/s)	DIFF PRESS (MPa)
Baseline (Table 1)	447	1211	3
Burning Rate Exponent = 1.0	442	1203	9
Burning Rate Exponent = 1.1	441	calculation not completed --	
Burning Rate Exponent = 1.2	----	flame did not propagate ---	
Burning Rate Exponent = 1.0; Ignition Temp = 444 K	383	1167	23
Burning Rate Exponent = 1.1; Ignition Temp = 444 K	359	1148	14
Burning Rate Exponent = 1.2; Ignition Temp = 444 K	339	1126	9

⁸A.W. Horst, "Influence of Burning Rate Representation on Gun Environment Flamespread and Pressure Wave Predictions," IHMR 76-255, Naval Ordnance Station, Indian Head, MD, March 1976.

We also note that while burning rates were originally provided to this investigator in terms of a single set of values for b and n in the classical $r=bp^n$ representation, actual closed bomb data, shown in Figure 4, reveal the presence of several apparent slope breaks. While two of these inflections occur at low pressures and are possibly complicated by flamespreading phenomena, the slope break near 100 MPa cannot be so easily discredited. The actual burning rate exponent in the highest pressure region shown ranges from 1.17 to 1.32, depending on treatment of the trailoff at the top end of the data. The results of several calculations using these data (Table 6) attest to the fact that ballistic performance is extremely sensitive to burning rates and that, at these high exponents, overall system ballistic sensitivity to other perturbations (e.g., variations in projectile weight, charge weight, or, as demonstrated here, engraving pressure) may be substantially increased. In the calculations reported, a change in peak engraving pressure from 21 to 34 MPa yielded increases in maximum chamber pressure of 75 and 201 MPa for the runs employing burning rate exponents of 1.05 and 1.17 respectively!

TABLE 6. SUMMARY OF CALCULATED RESULTS - MULTI-SLOPE BURNING RATES

STUDY PARAMETER	MAX PRESS (MPa)	MUZ VELOCITY (m/s)	DIFF PRESS (MPa)
Baseline (Table 1)	447	1211	3
Multi-Slope; High- Pressure Exponent = 1.32	1234	1393	11
Multi-Slope; High- Pressure Exponent = 1.17	561	1280	11
Multi-Slope; High- Pressure Exponent = 1.17; Engraving Pressure = 21 MPa	360	1158	6
Multi-Slope; High- Pressure Exponent = 1.17; Engraving Pressure = 28 MPa	458	1232	10

A relevant selection of results from the above calculations is depicted graphically in Figure 5, where predictions of maximum chamber pressure and the corresponding pressure-wave level are displayed. The predicted trend, if any, is not very satisfying in light of experimental results. Clearly, some process is occurring in the 105-mm gun that is not being captured in the NOVA simulations. This result, however, is not unprecedented, and indeed has been discussed in some detail in a previously referenced publication,⁵ where the missing link was postulated to be grain fracture. If we explore our calculations in somewhat more detail, we note that increasing levels of bed compac-

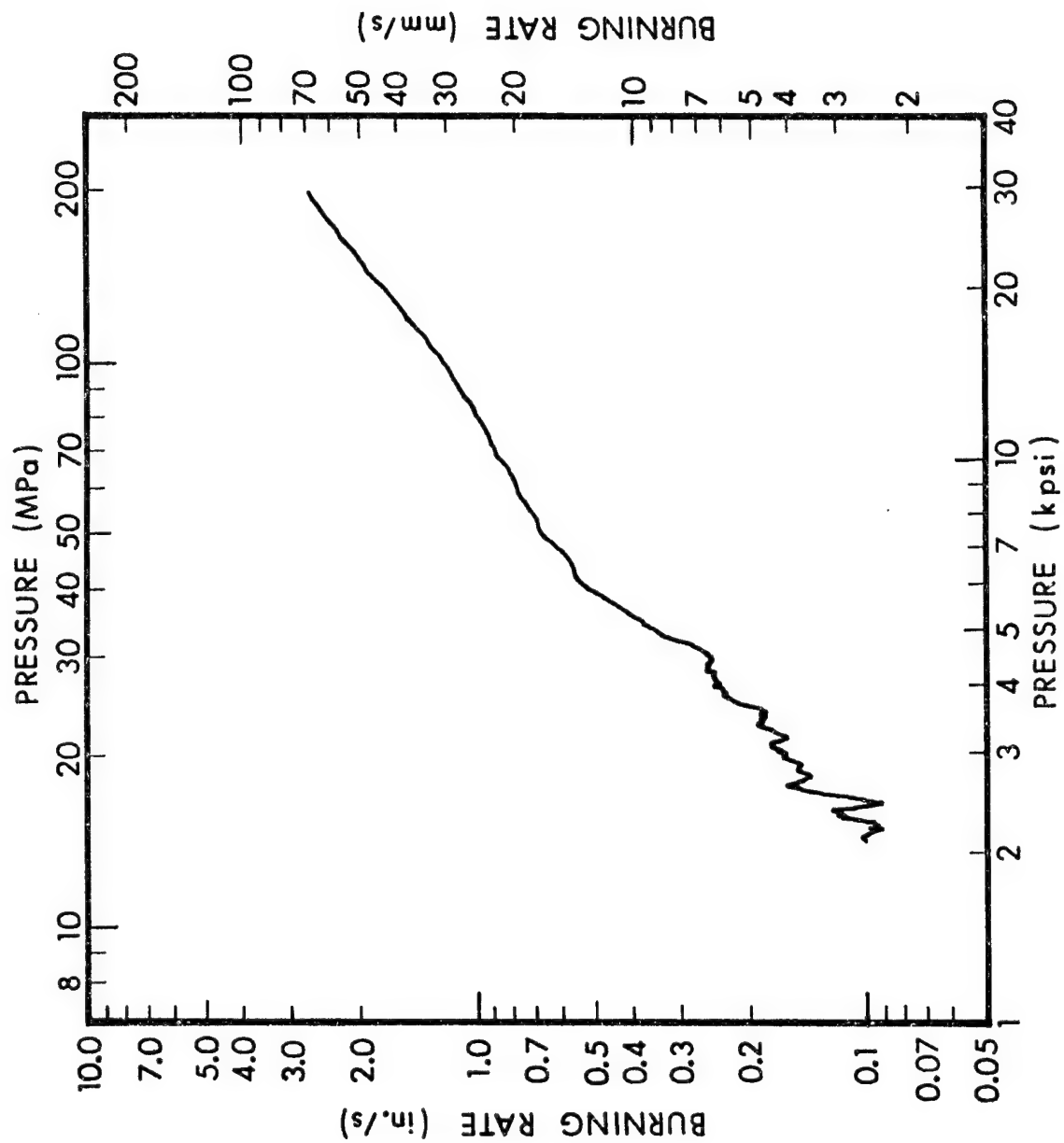


Figure 4. Closed Bomb Burning Rate Data for Test Propellant

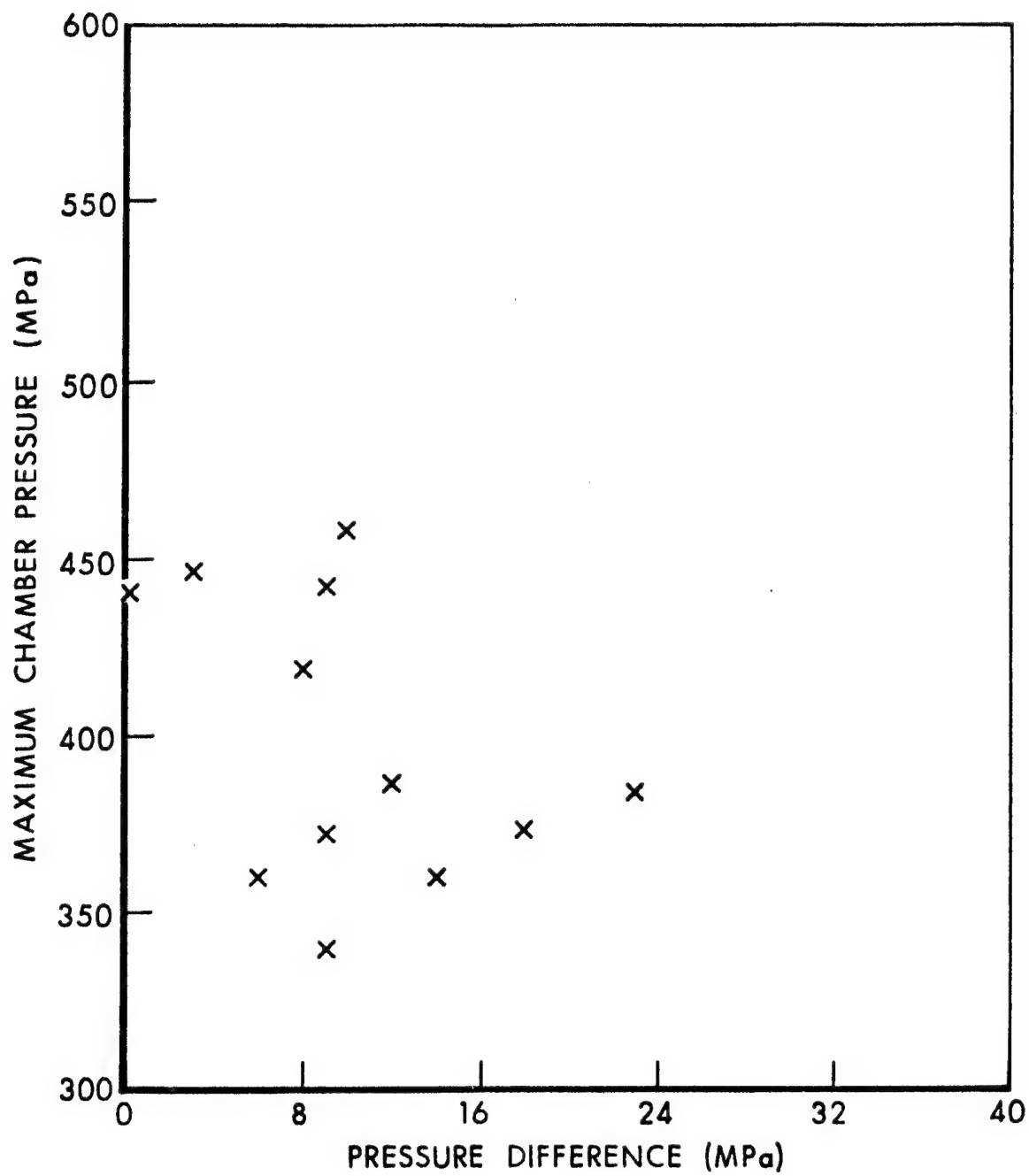


Figure 5. Maximum Chamber Pressure Versus Initial Reverse Pressure Difference, Calculated

tion and accompanying intergranular stress at the forward edge of the propellant bed are associated with increases in the magnitude of predicted pressure waves. These relationships have been included as Figures 6 and 7 and, if realistic, are very likely to result in grain fracture in the gun -- even if not in the NOVA code!

In response to this possibility, several special NOVA calculations were performed to determine the influence of localized grain fracture in this region of high intergranular stress. To simulate this process, the calculation was halted at the appropriate time and the forward 10 cm of propellant were "fractured," as indicated in Figure 8, yielding local increases in surface area of about 3 1/2 and 6 times that of the unaltered grains. (We note that the cylindrical "splinters" shown are not necessarily believed to reflect the actual configuration of shattered grains but are simply employed to facilitate numerical treatment of the problem.) The calculation was then resumed with this increased burning surface locally concentrated in the front of the gun chamber. Ignition temperatures were also manipulated between 444 and 694 K to allow investigation of this event both when the newly fractured grains had previously been ignited and when flamespread had not quite reached this portion of the charge. The data shown in Table 7 reflect the results from this series of NOVA runs, both identifying a mechanism capable of substantial impact on maximum chamber pressures and confirming the earlier result that variations in flamespreading properties could be one source of ballistic irreproducibility with LOVA propellants.

TABLE 7. SUMMARY OF CALCULATED RESULTS - GRAIN FRACTURE

STUDY PARAMETER	MAX PRESS (MPa)	MUZ VELOCITY (m/s)	DIFF PRESS (MPa)
Baseline (Table 1)	447	1211	3
Baseline with Ignition Temperature = 444 K	372	1159	18
Fracture Diameter = 1.8 mm; Ignition Temperature = 694 K	397	1178	20
Fracture Diameter = 1.8 mm; Ignition Temperature = 444 K	397	1180	23
Fracture Diameter = 0.9 mm; Ignition Temperature = 694 K	483	calculation not completed	19
Fracture Diameter = 0.9 mm; Ignition Temperature = 444 K	534	1259	41

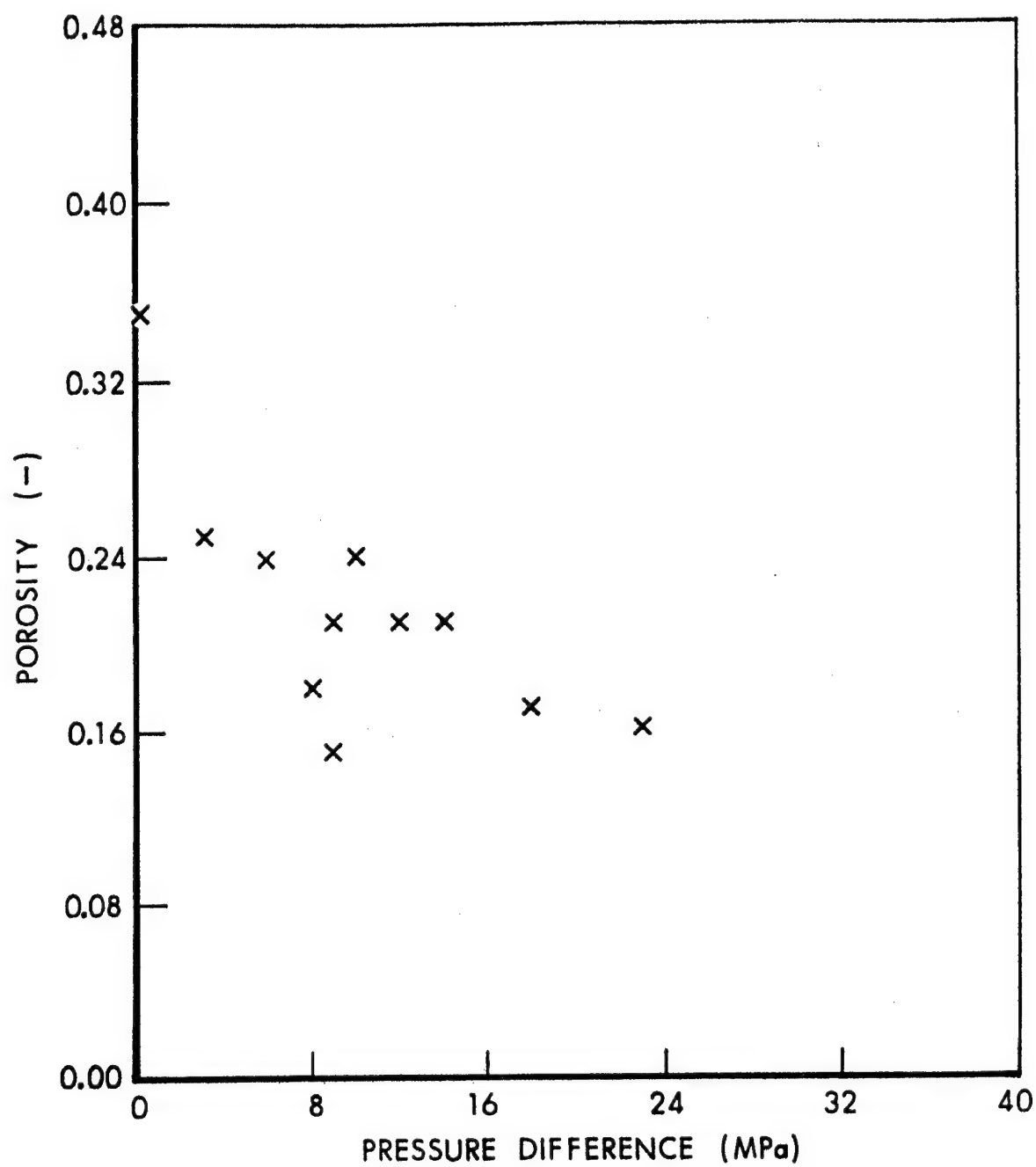


Figure 6. Minimum Bed Porosity Versus Initial Reverse Pressure Difference, Calculated

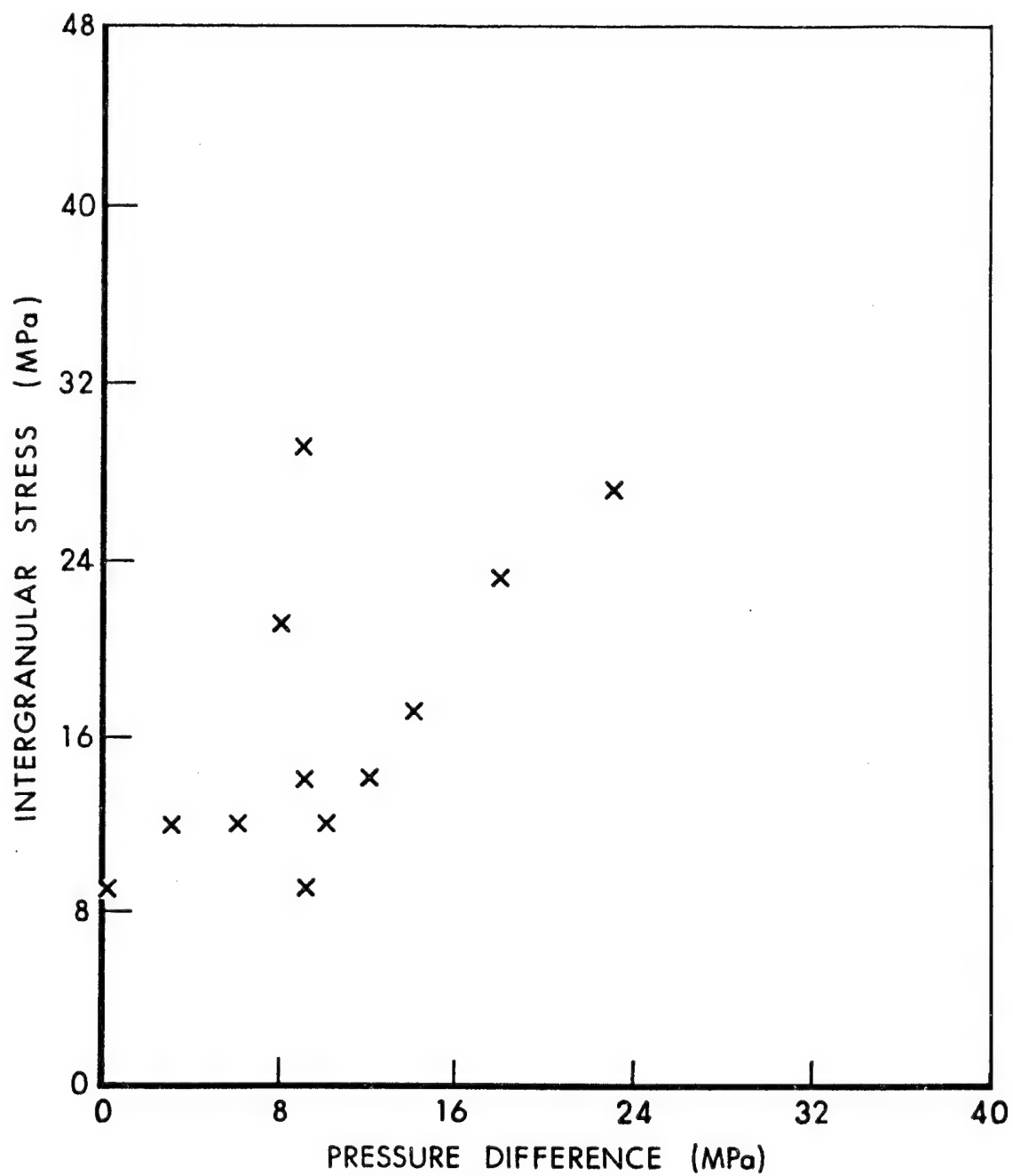
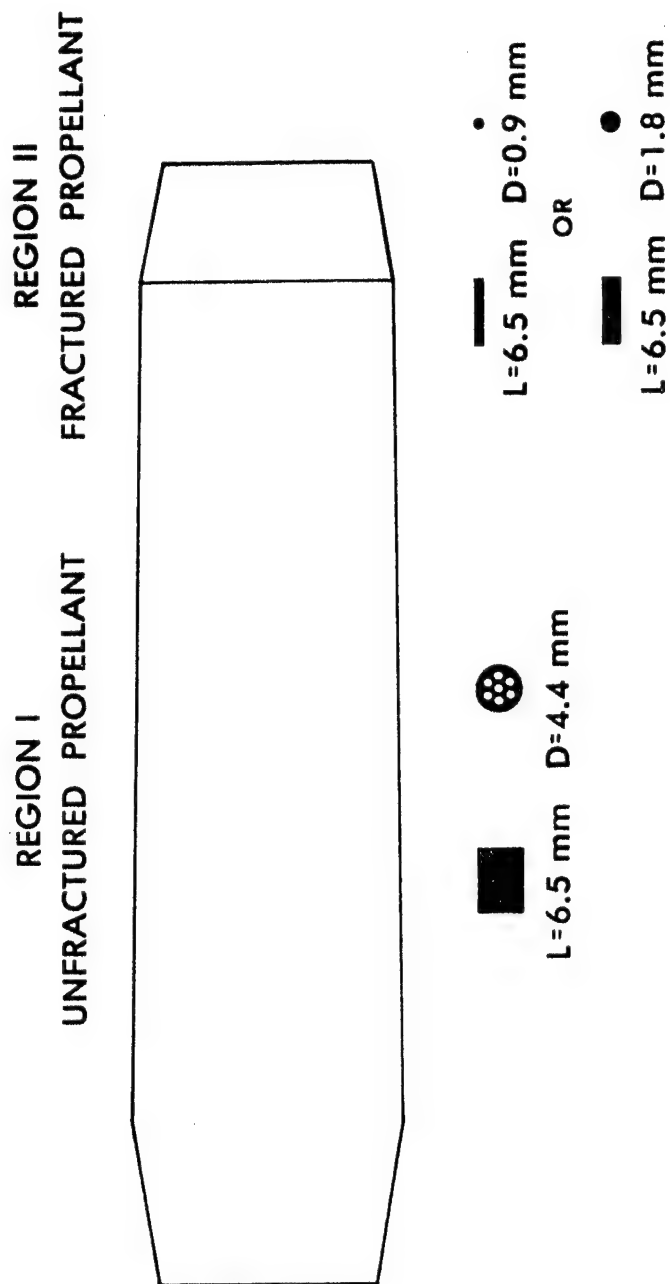


Figure 7. Maximum Intergranular Stress Versus Initial Reverse Pressure Difference, Calculated



NOTE: PROPELLANT GRAINS ENLARGED FOR CLARITY

Figure 8. NOVA Code Representation of Grain "Fracture"

III. CONCLUSIONS

While the above analysis involved many simplifications of both physical and chemical aspects of the propellant system under study, the following conclusions can be drawn from calculated results:

1. Performance variability experienced during ballistic testing of LOVA propellant Mix 1453 and very likely for any other propellant exhibiting similar combustion properties may be, in some significant part, a result of variations in the extent of flamespread at first motion of the projectile. This result underscores the need for reproducibility of both propellant ignitability and primer performance.

2. Performance variability for such propellants will also be exacerbated by an increased system sensitivity associated with high burning rate exponents. Burning rate data over the entire range encountered in the gun are necessary to assure propellant acceptability and reproducibility; a single bp^n description fit over the entire range will most often not be useful to this end and perhaps may even be misleading.

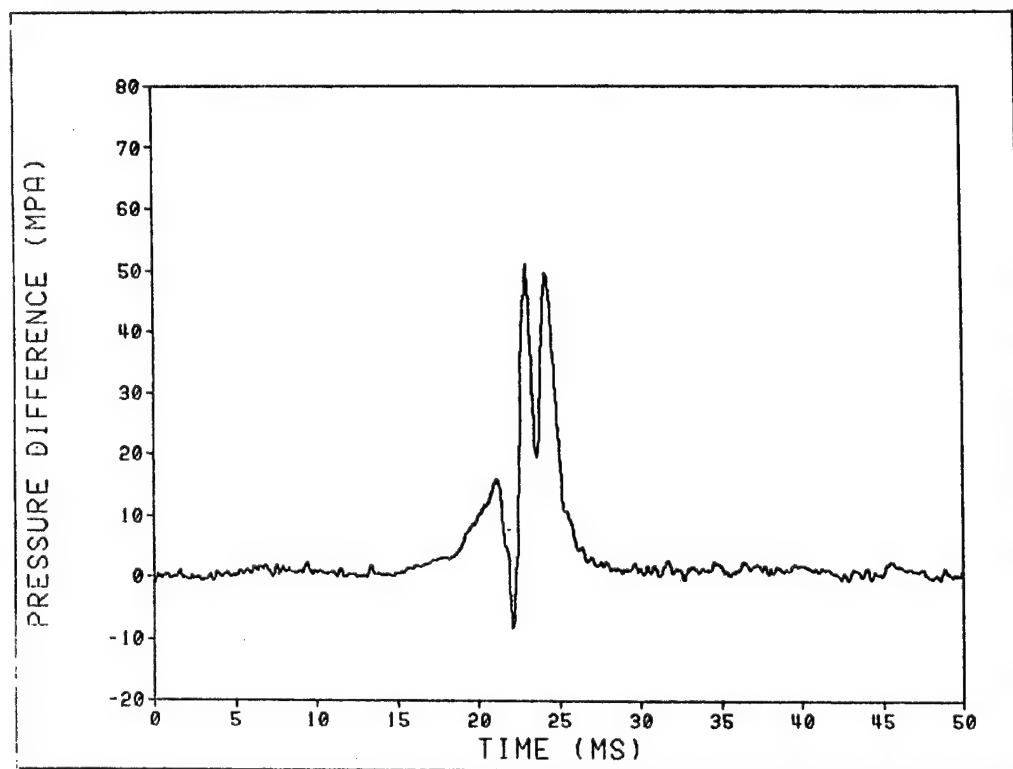
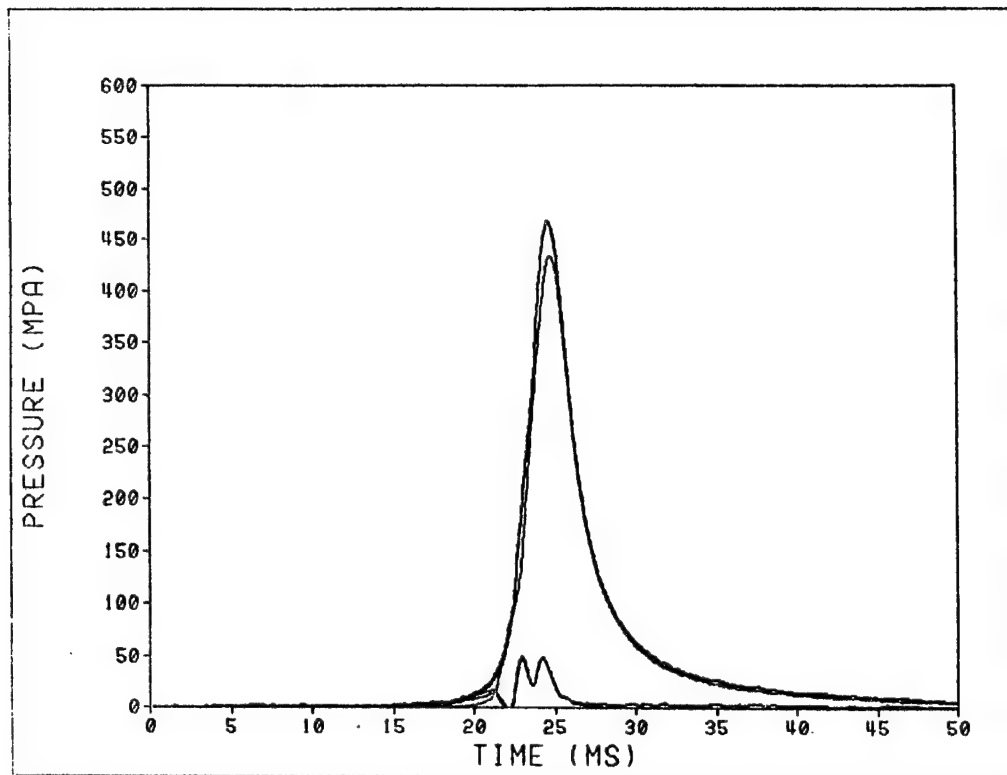
3. Neither of the above mechanisms, however, is sufficient to explain the apparent relationship between maximum chamber pressure and pressure waves. While they may be responsible for a variation in the magnitude of the pressure waves themselves, propellant grain fracture, caused by the accompanying high levels of intergranular stress, is once again implicated as the likely link between increases in pressure waves and increases in maximum chamber pressure.

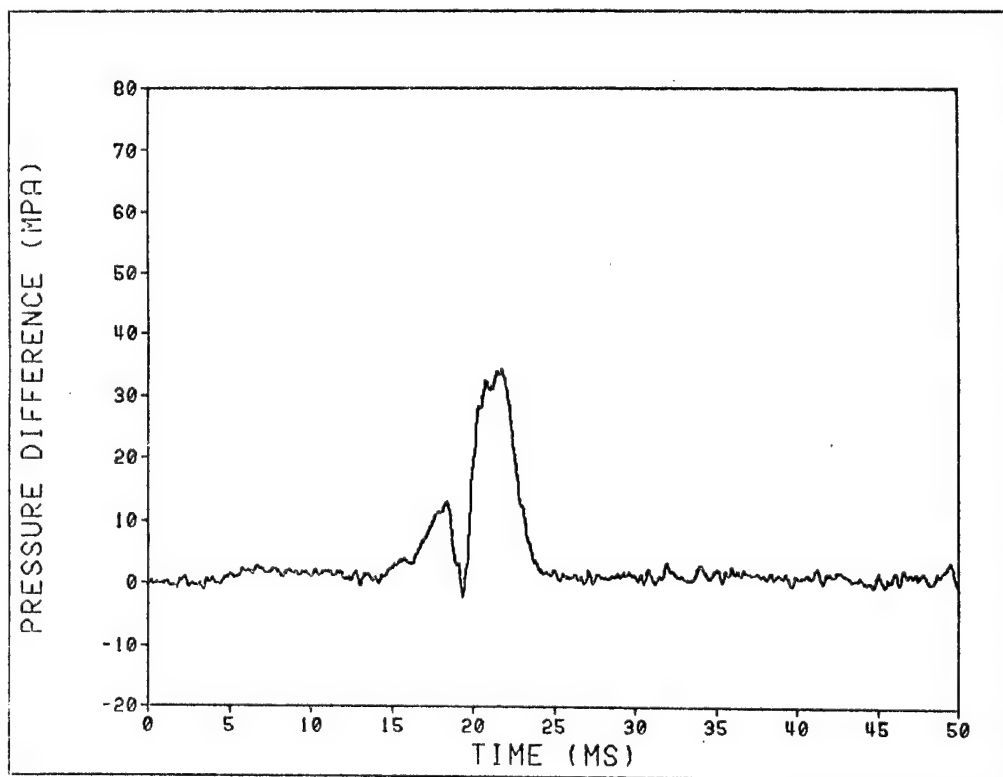
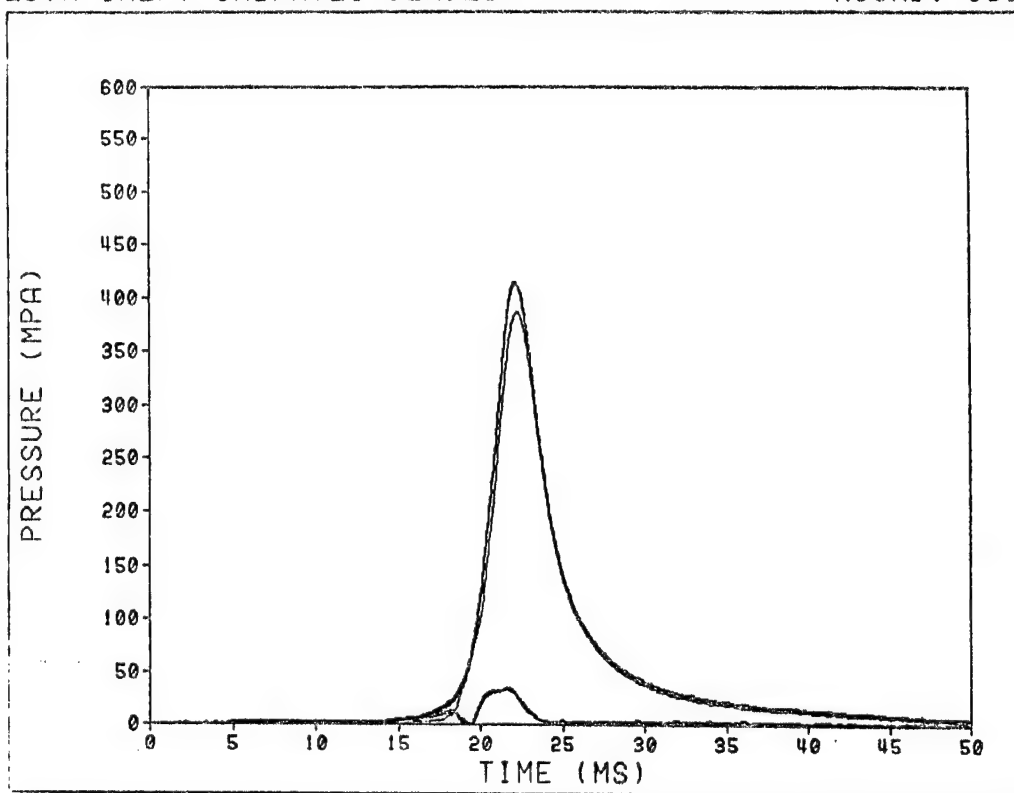
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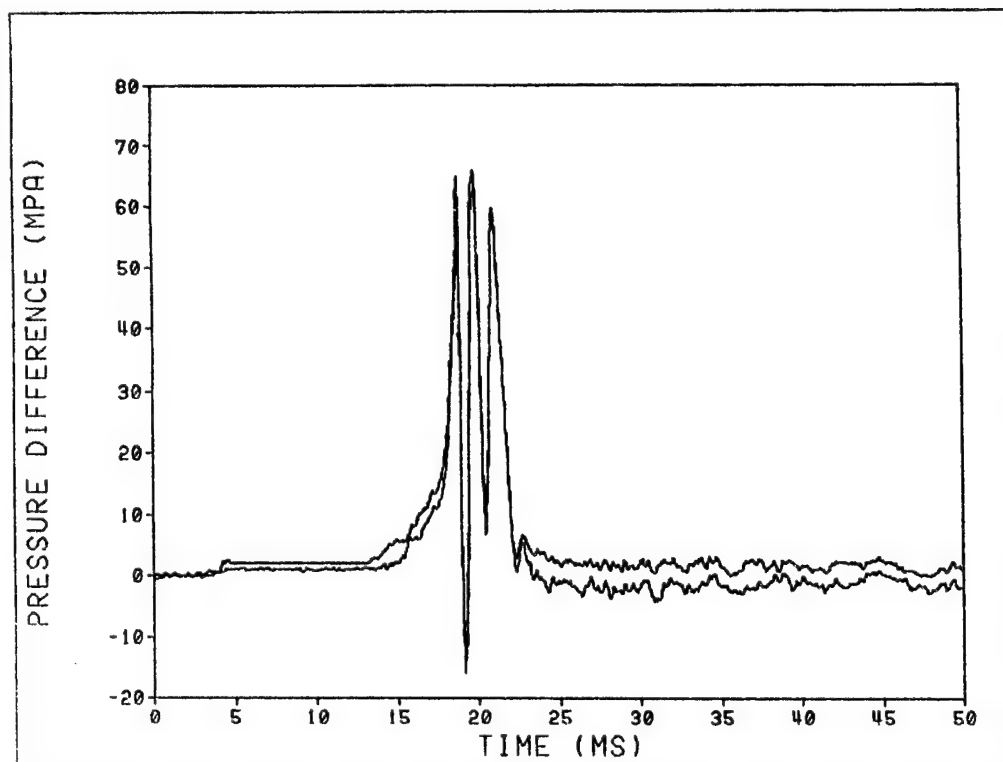
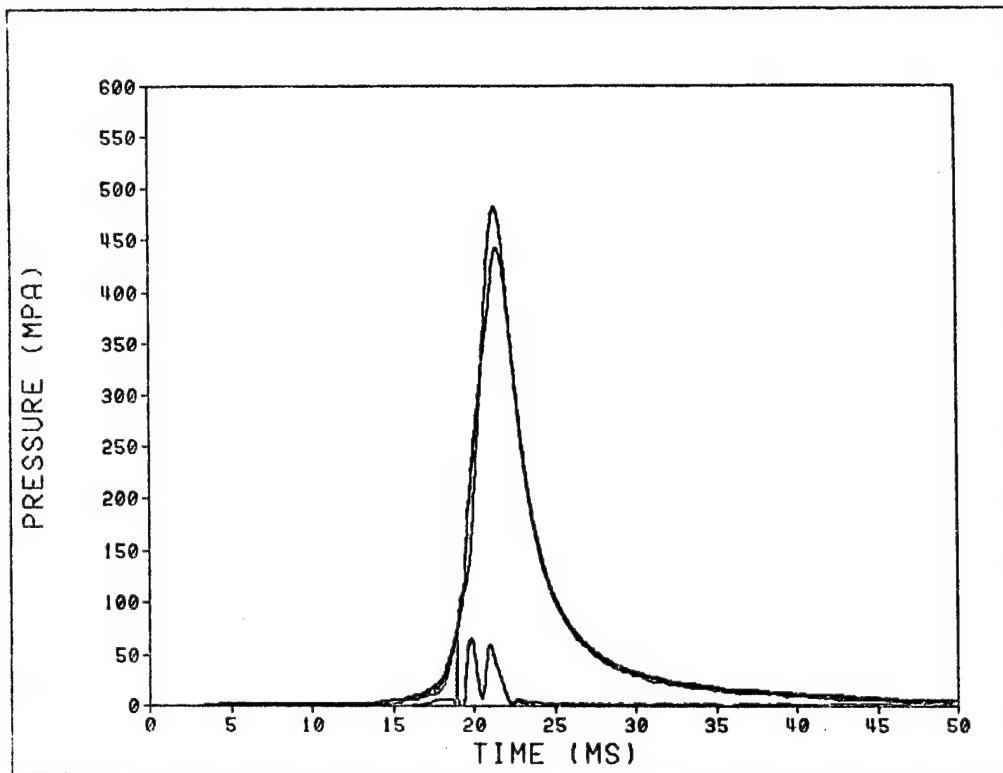
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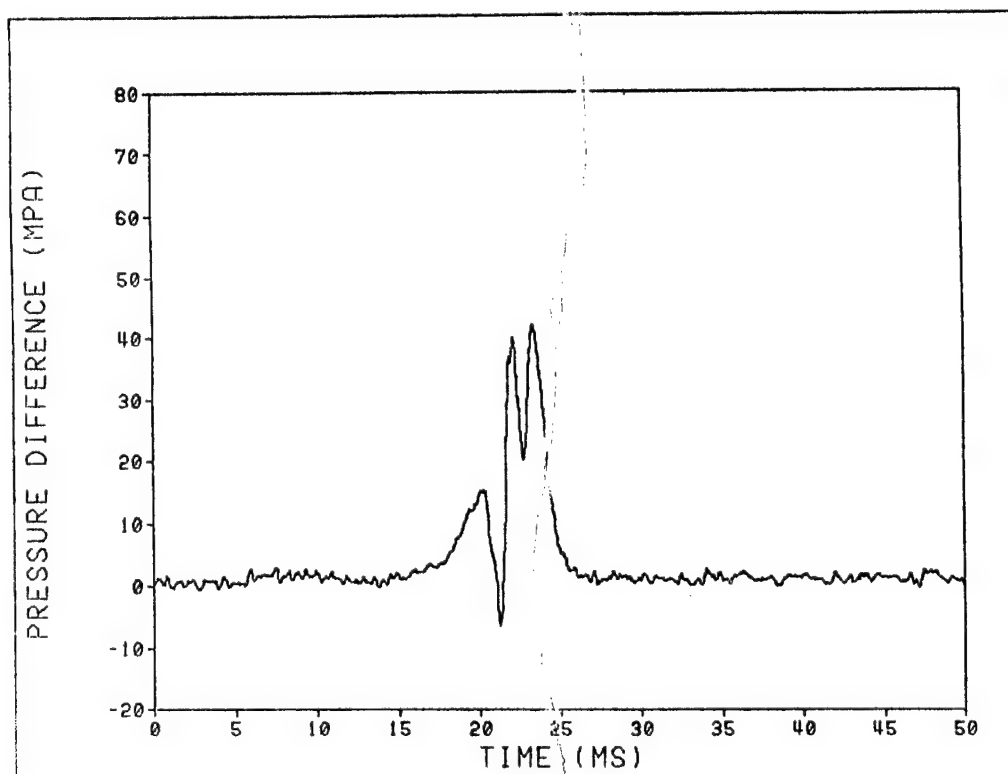
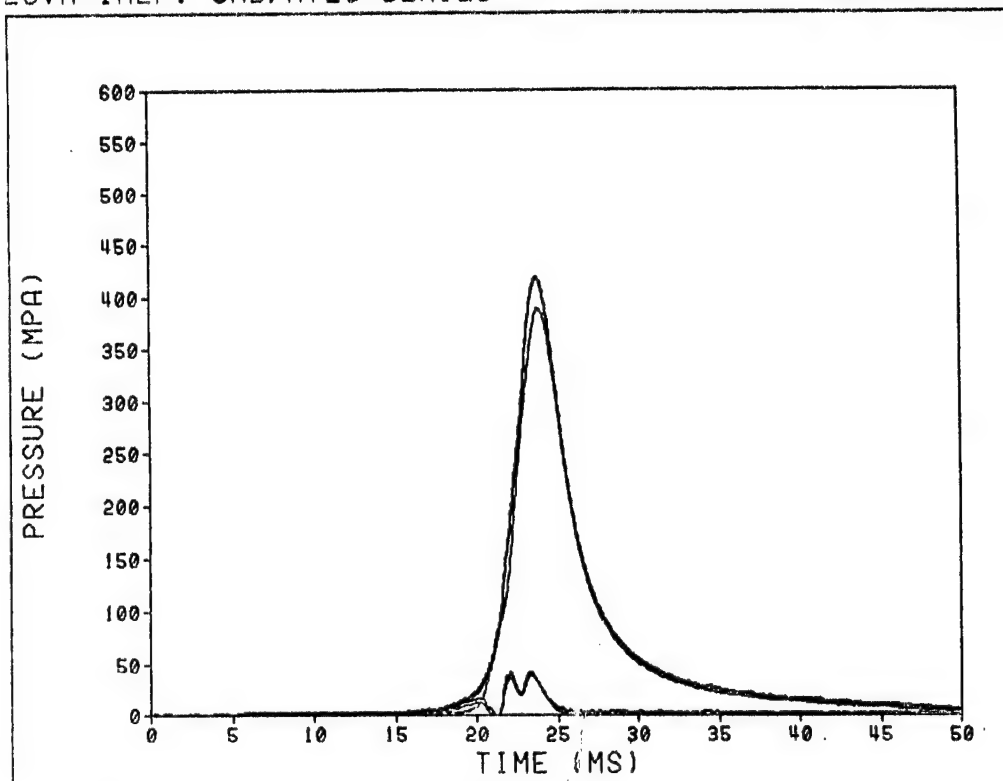
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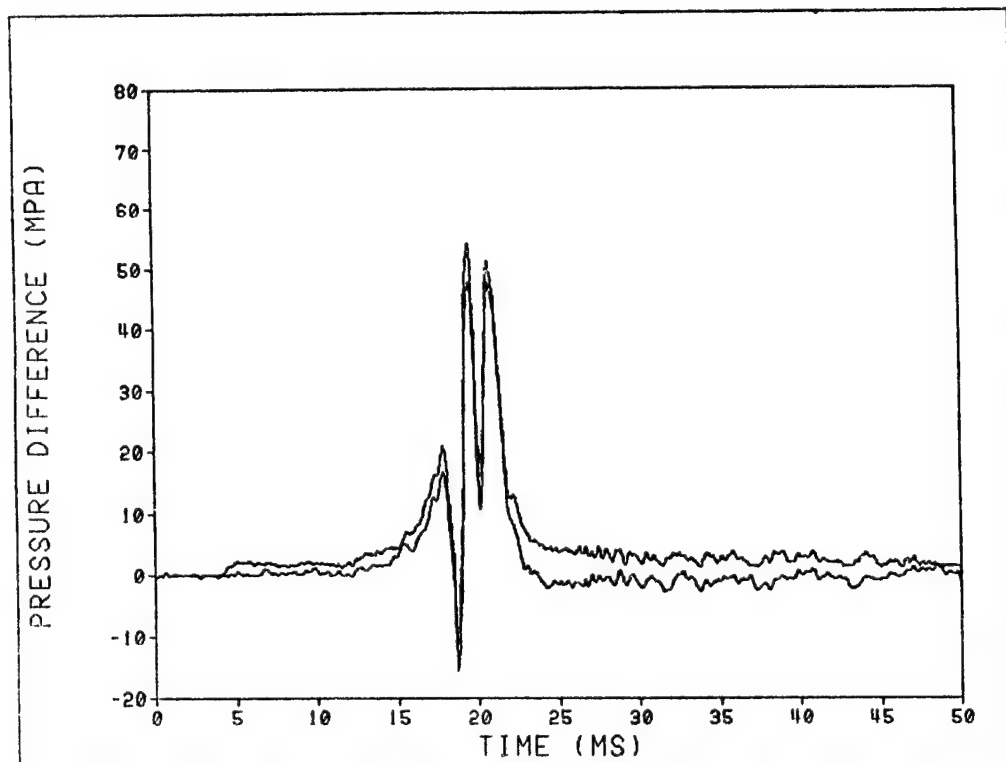
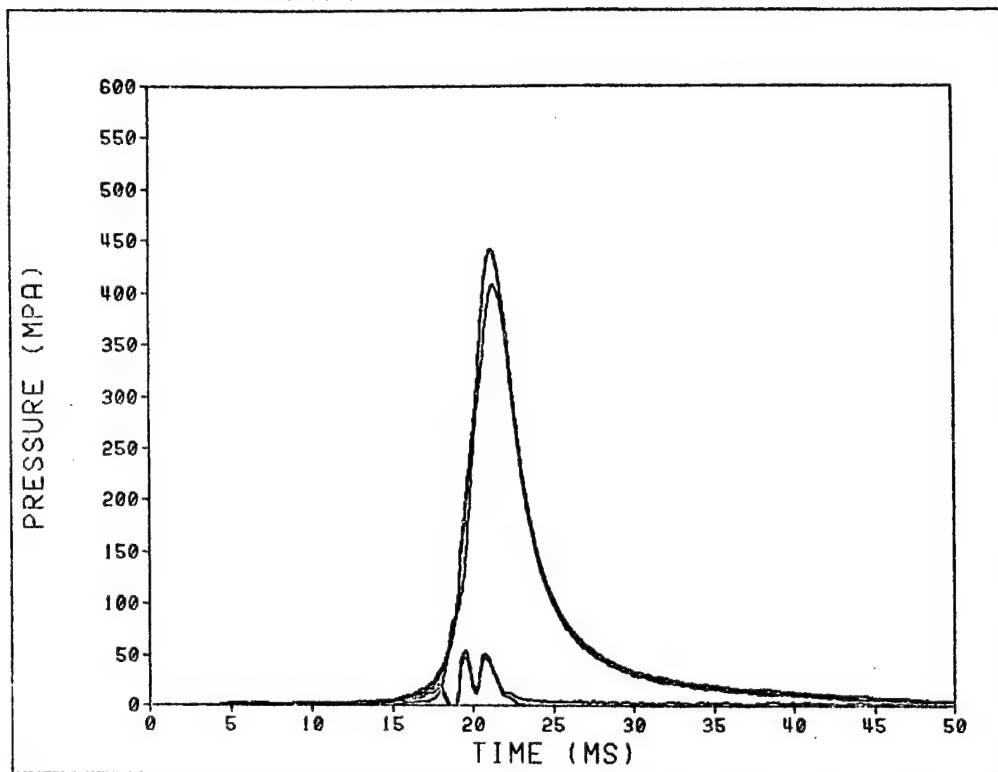
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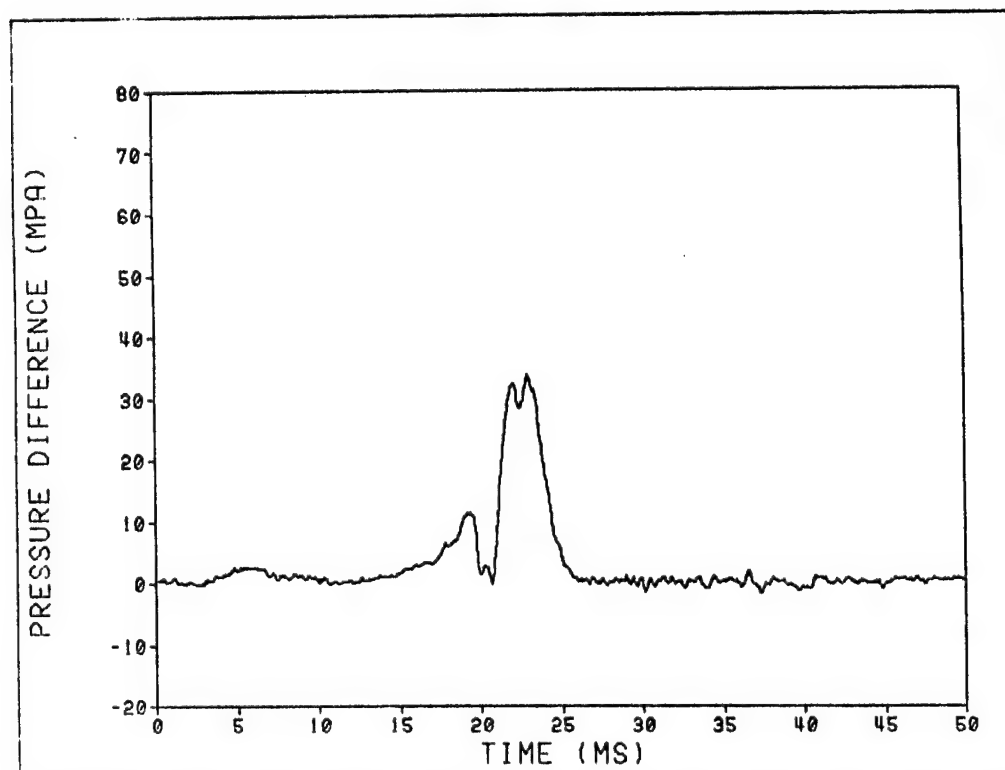
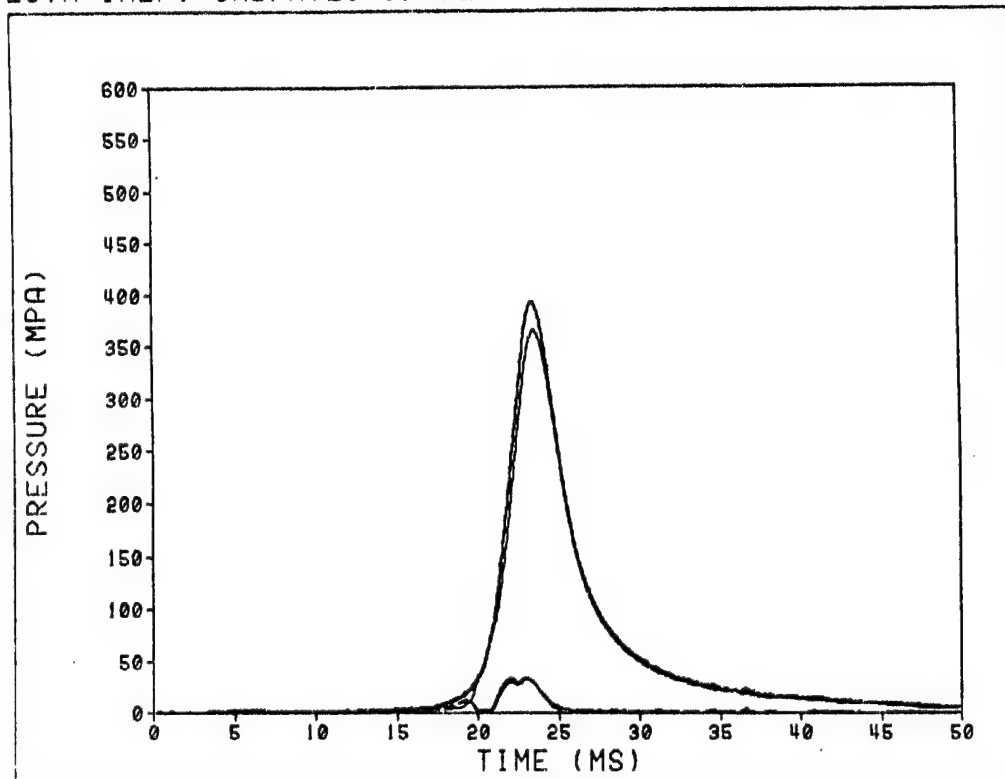


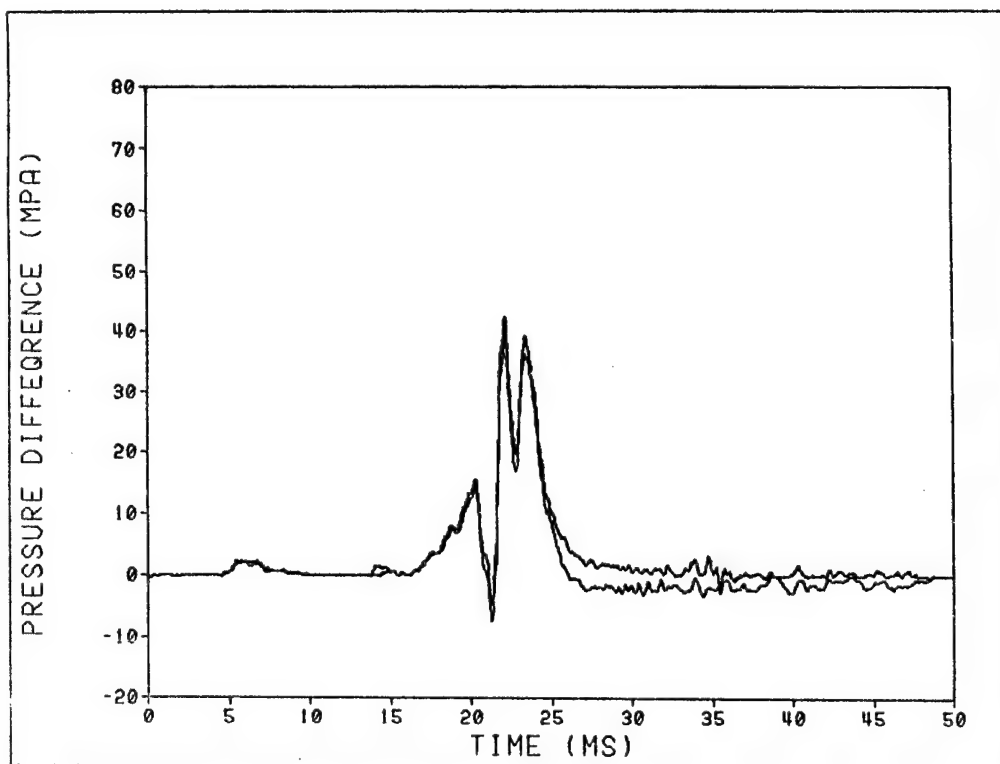
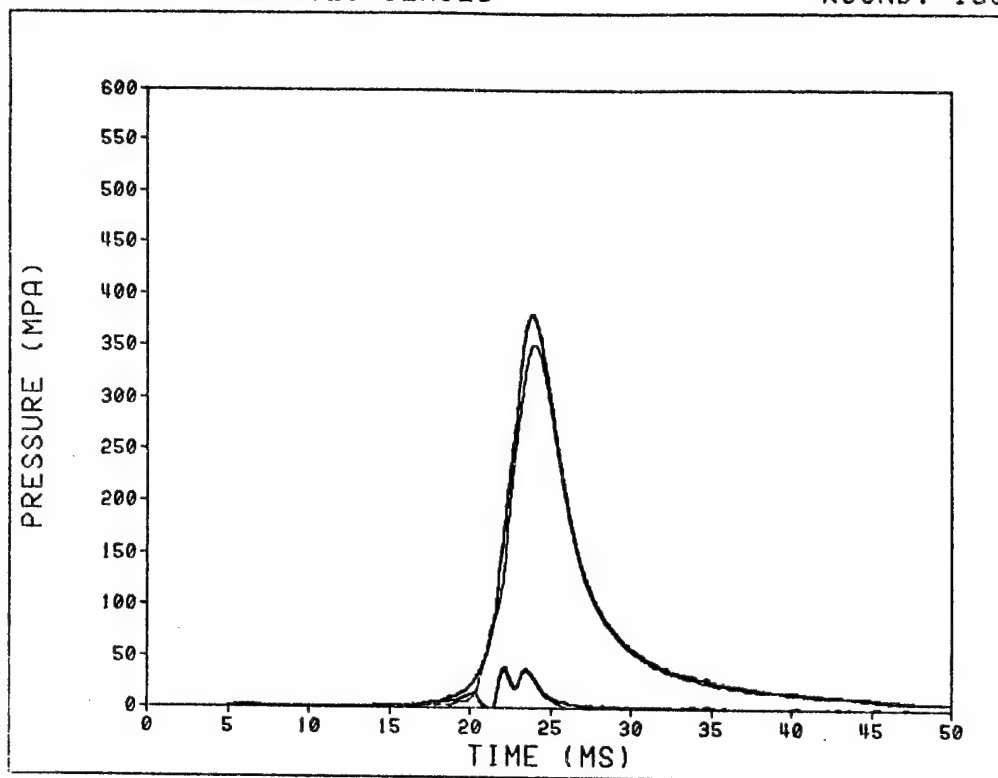


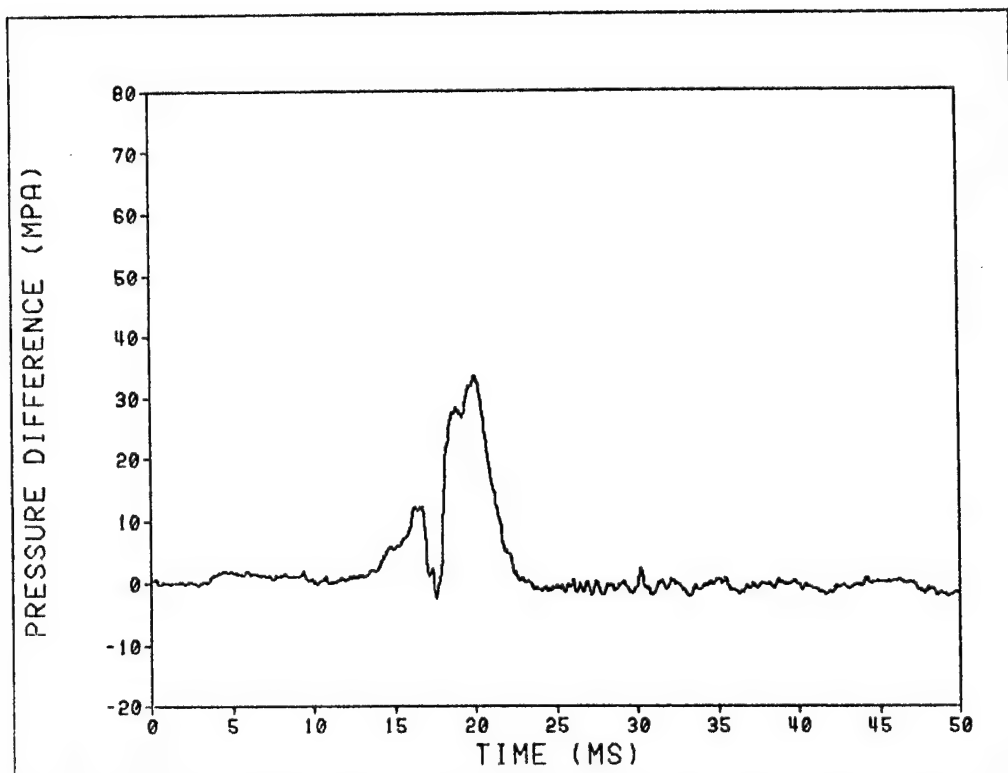
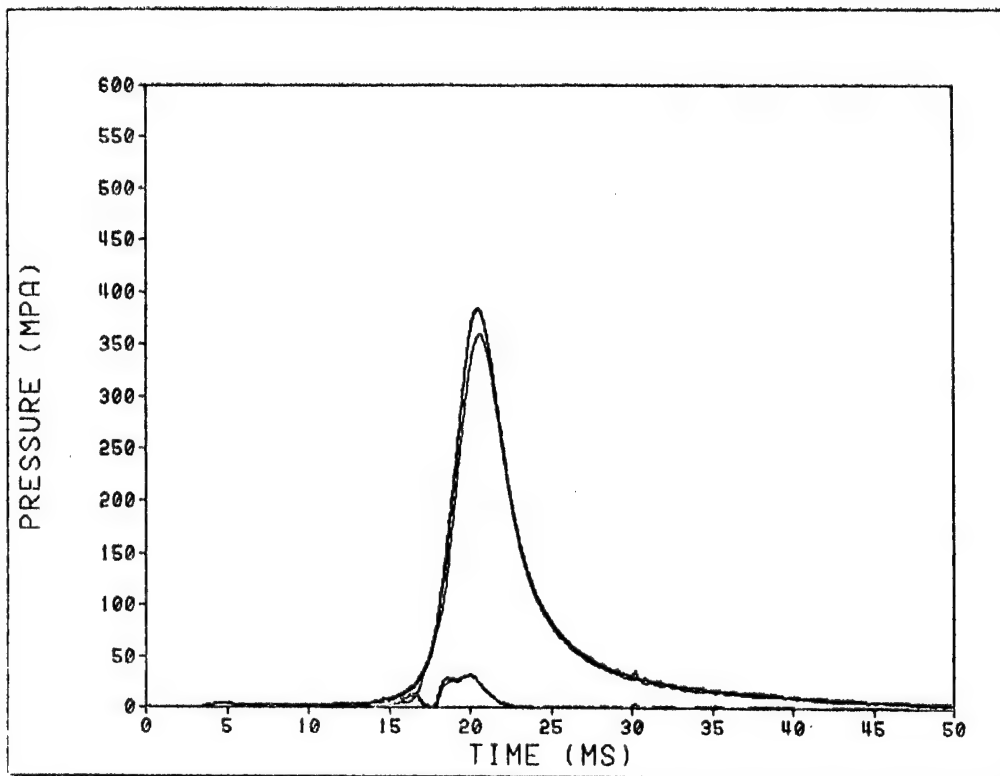


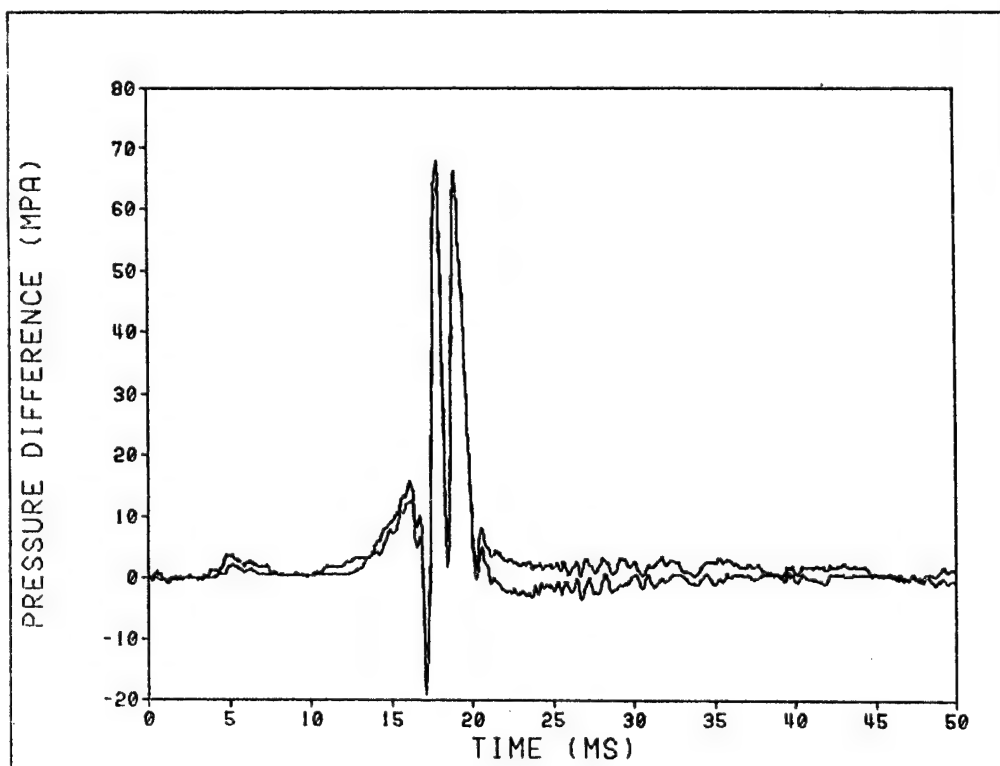
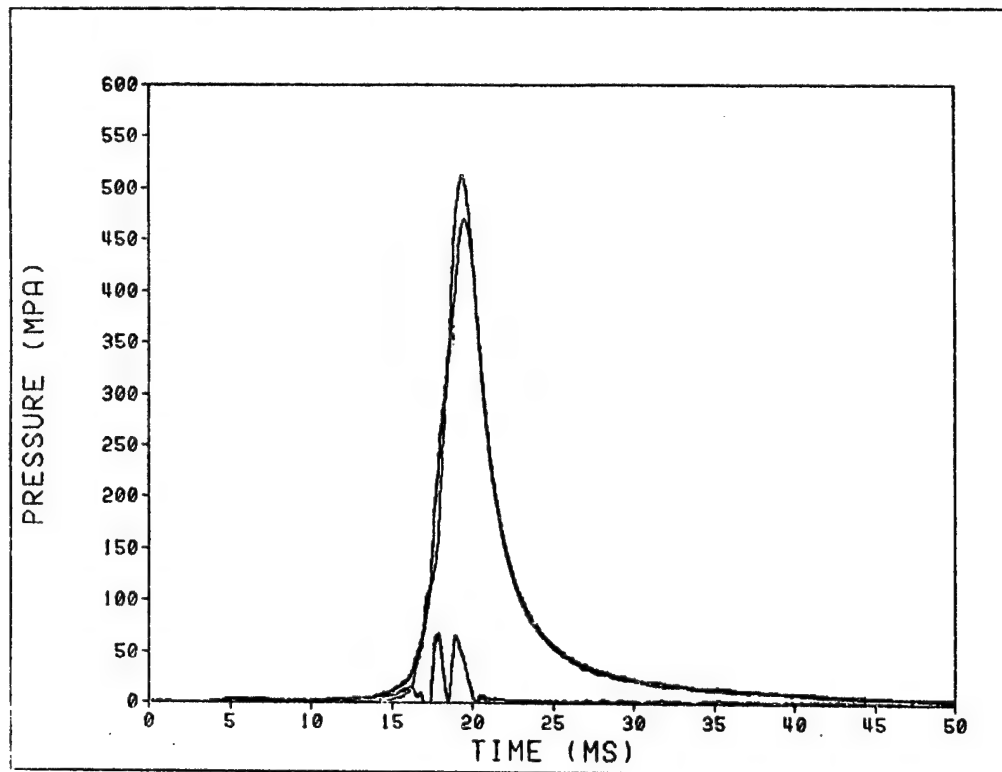


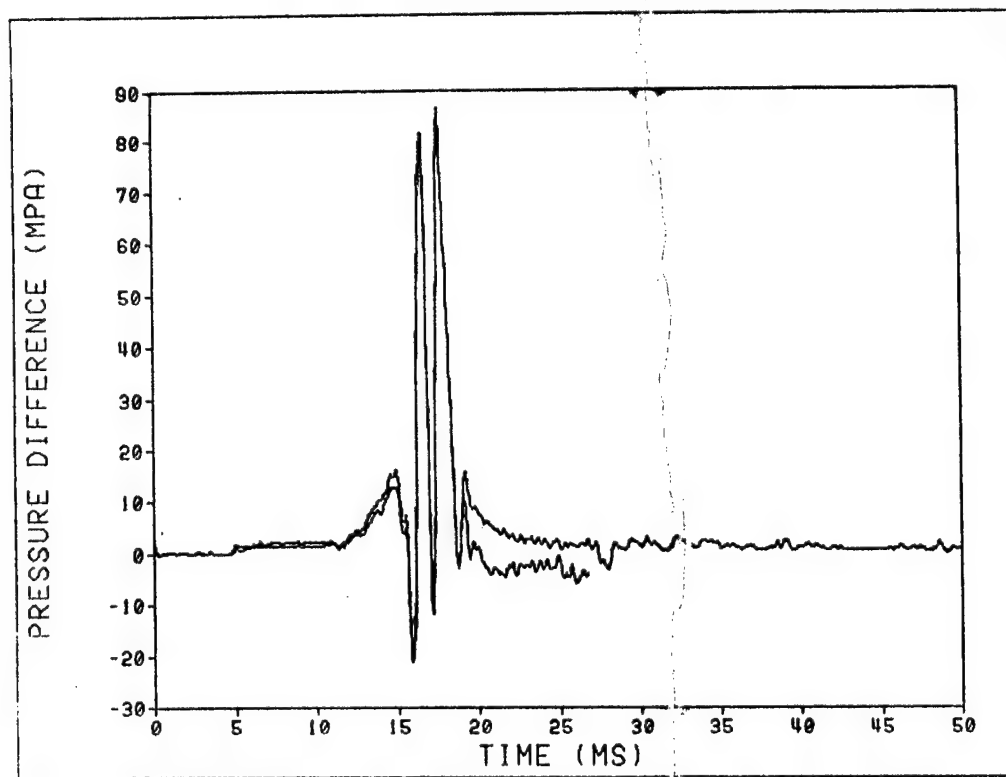
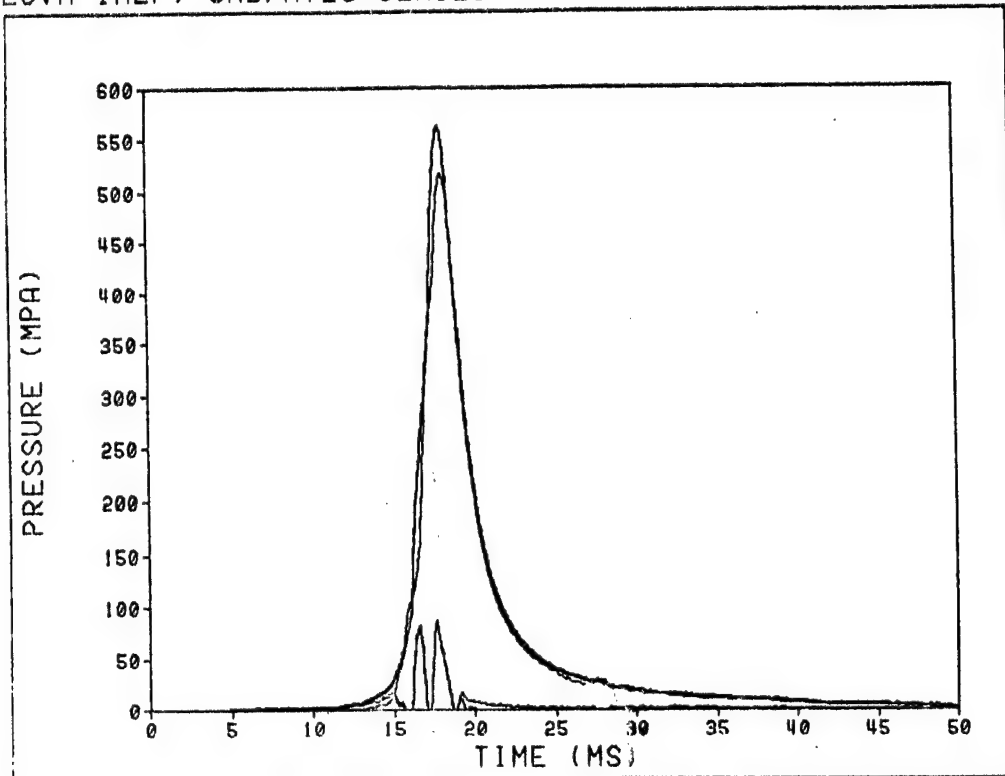


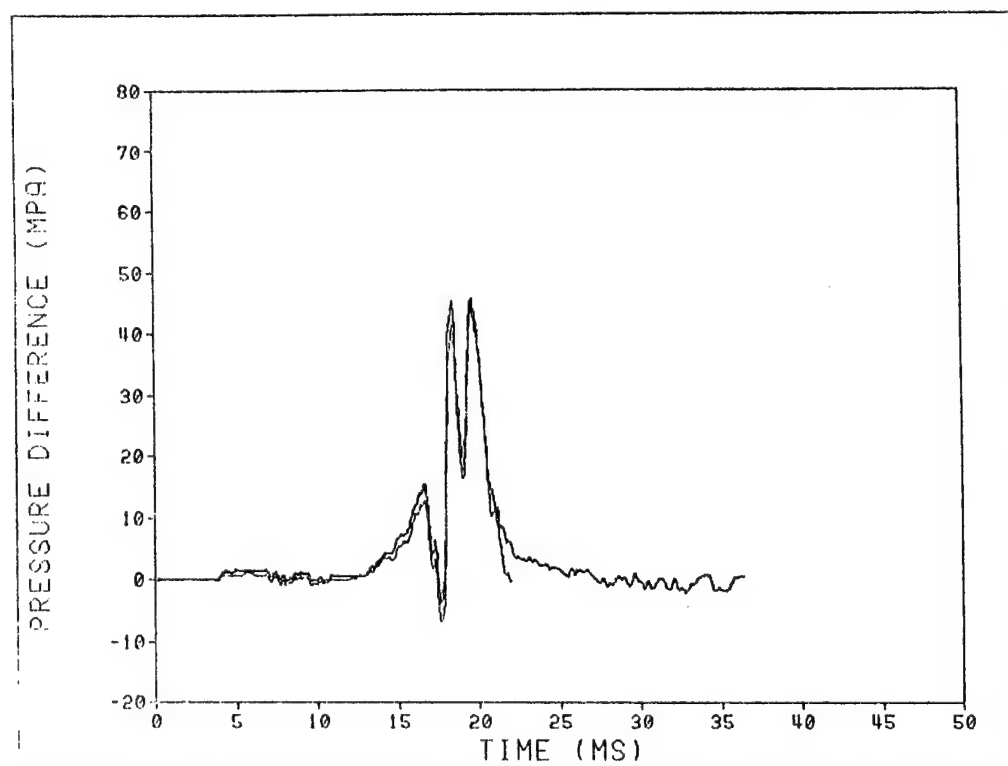
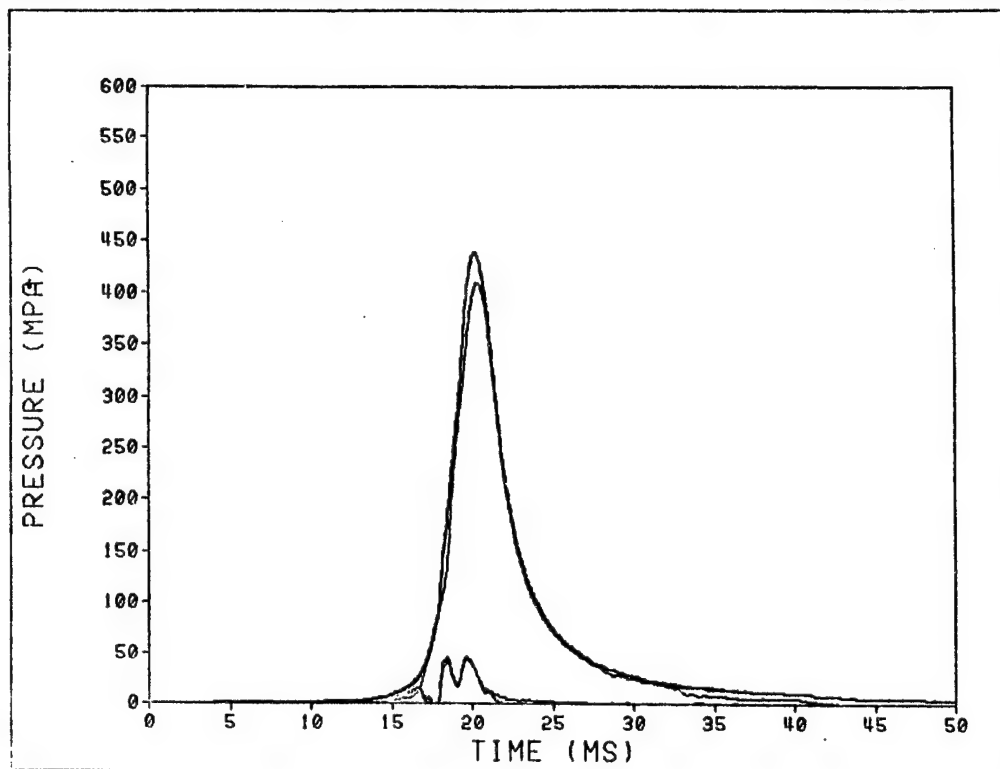






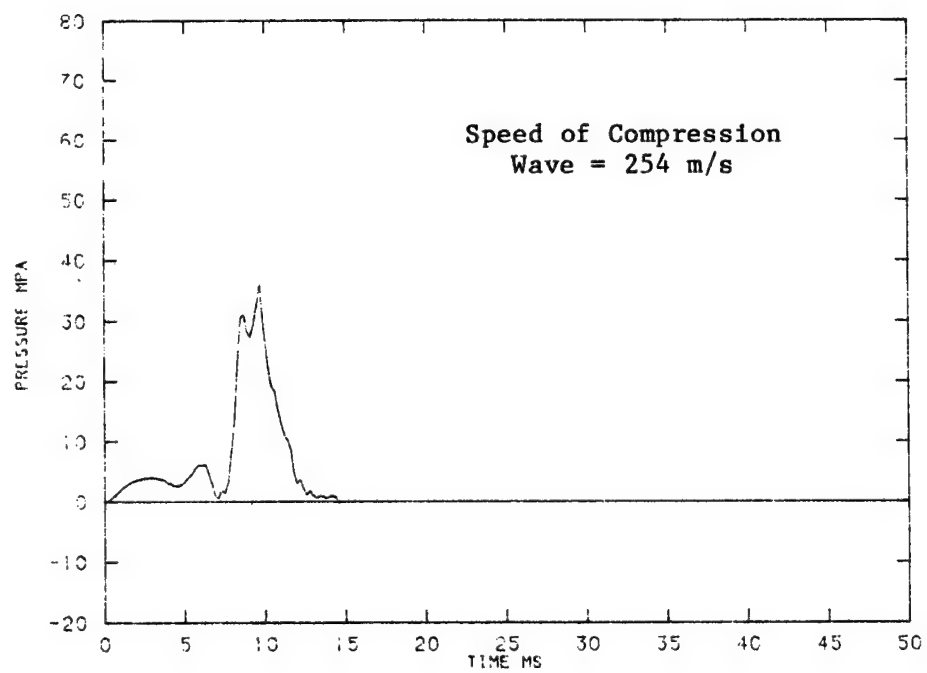
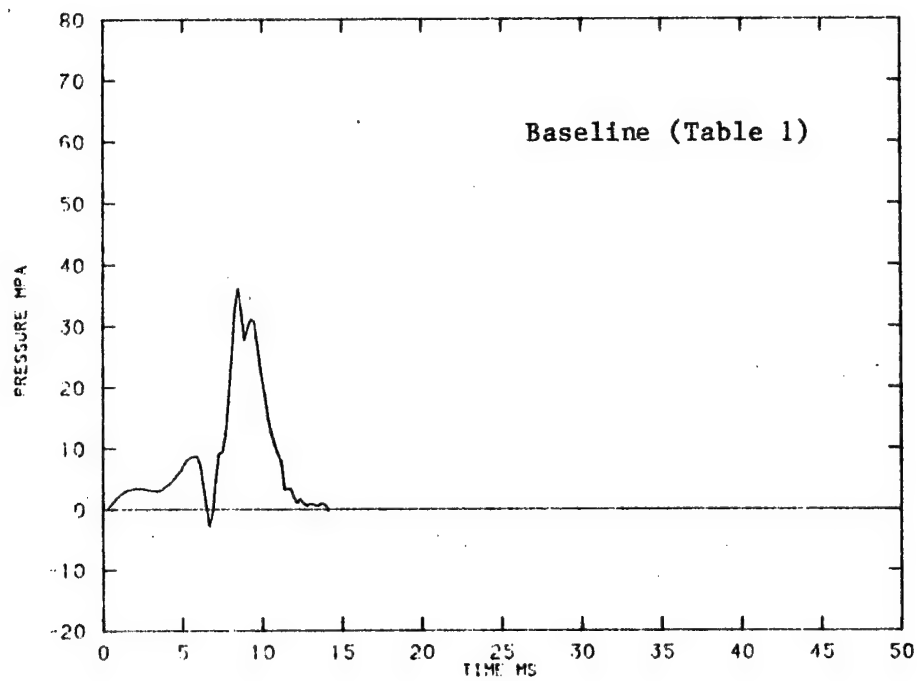


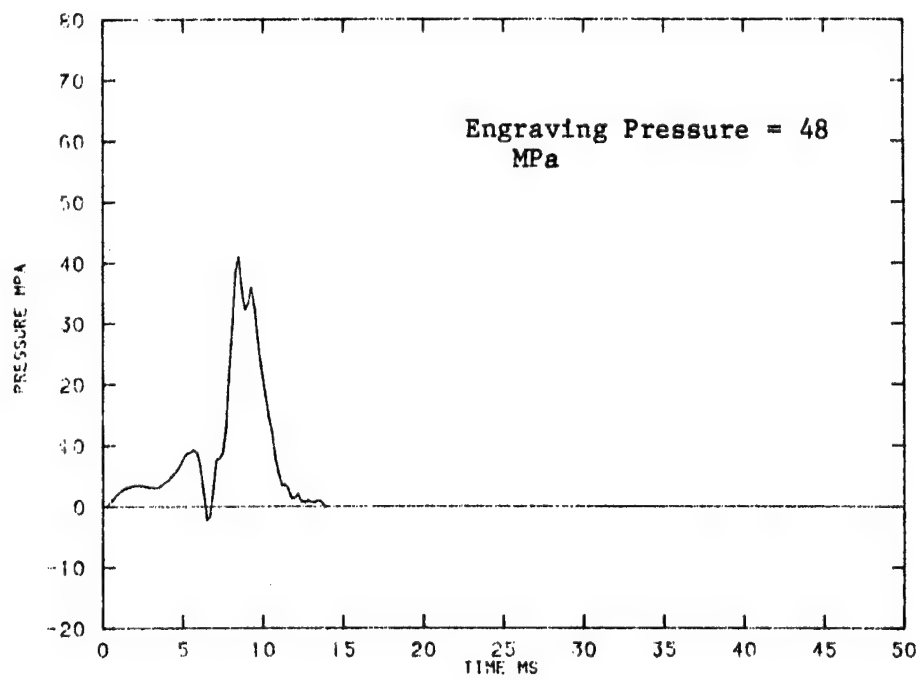
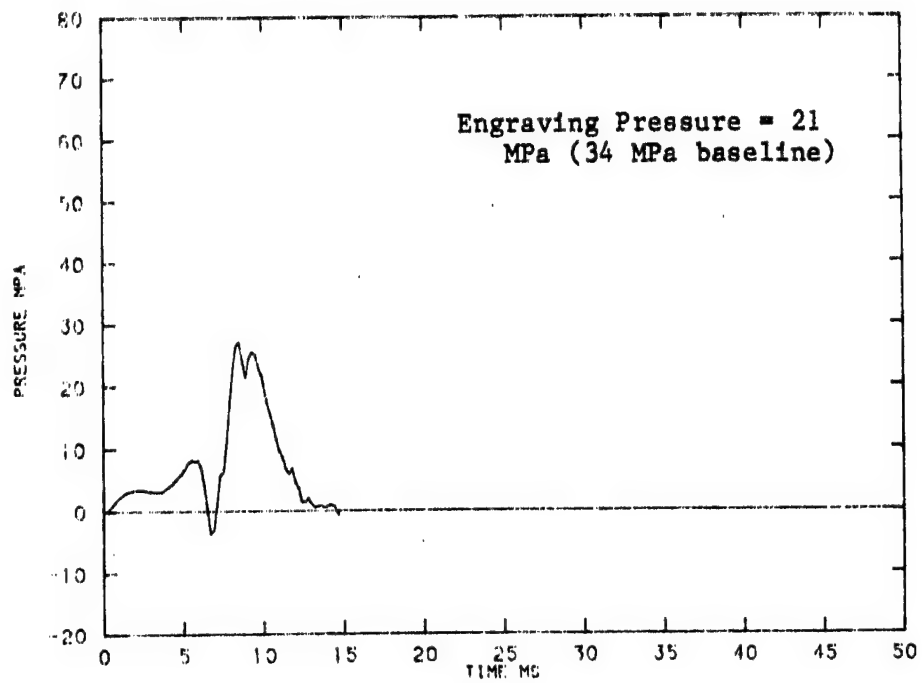


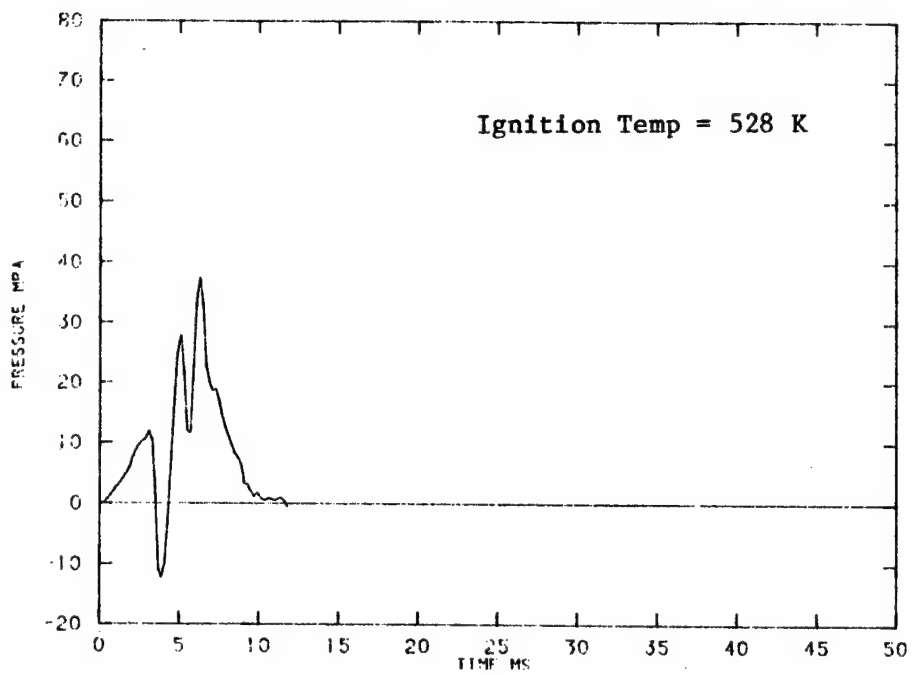
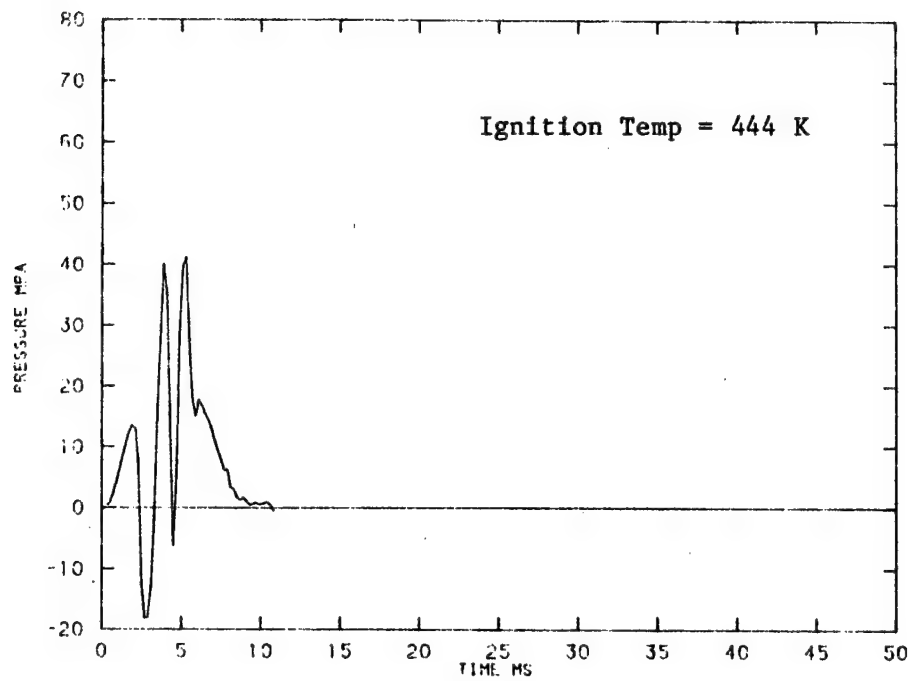


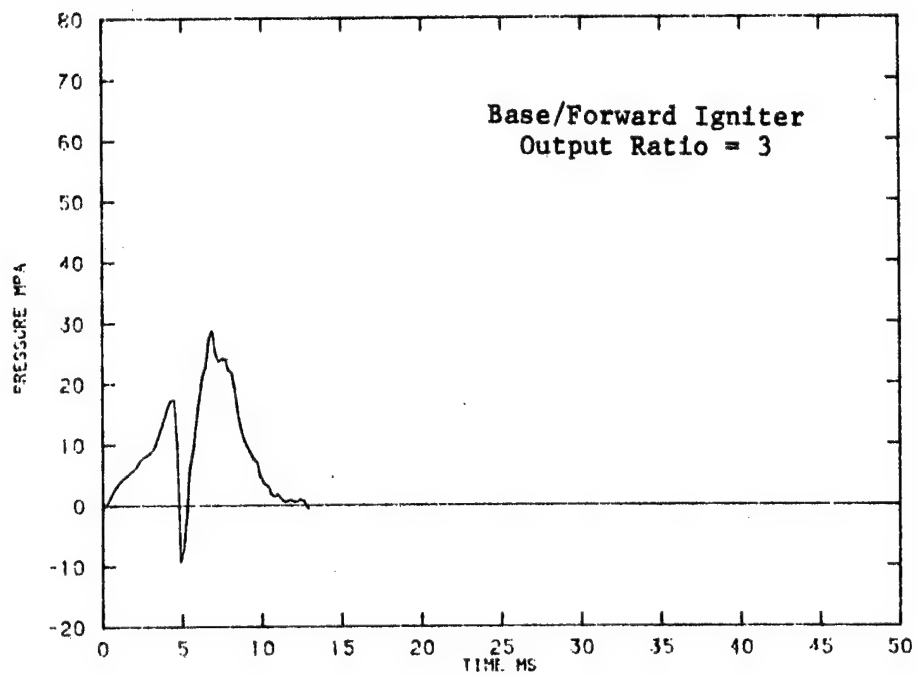
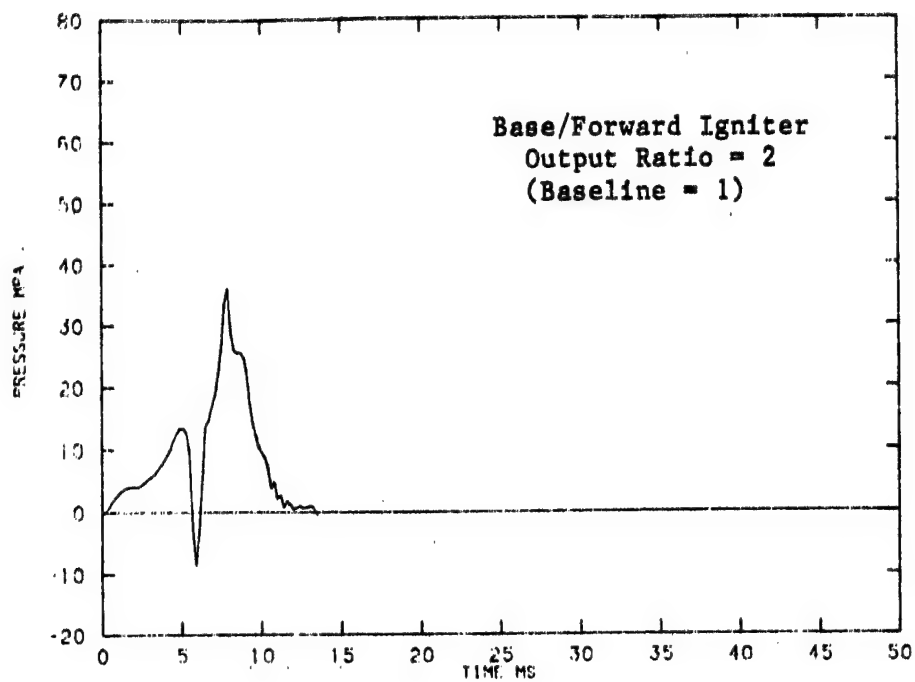
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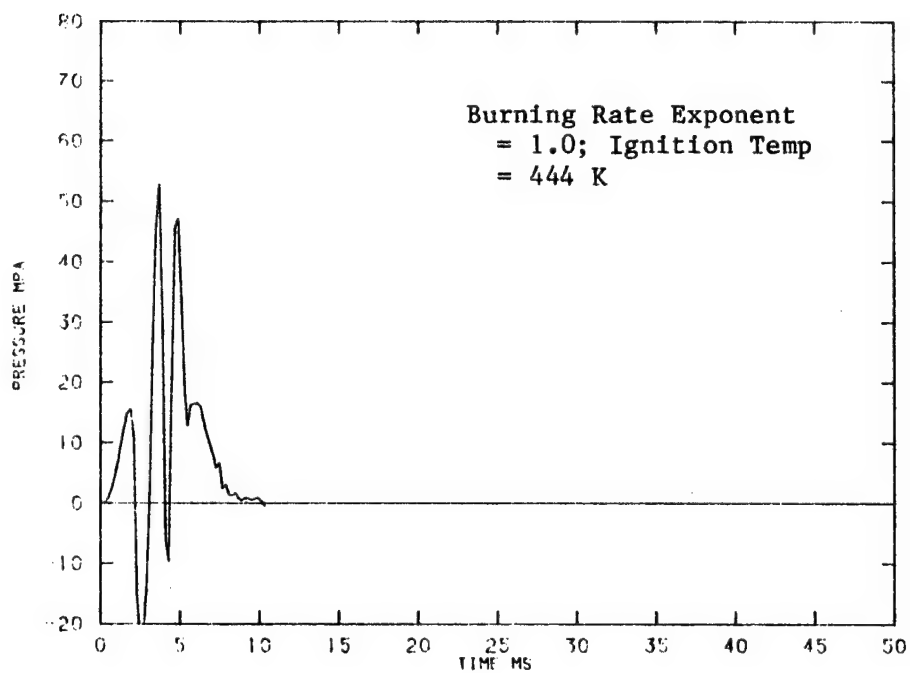
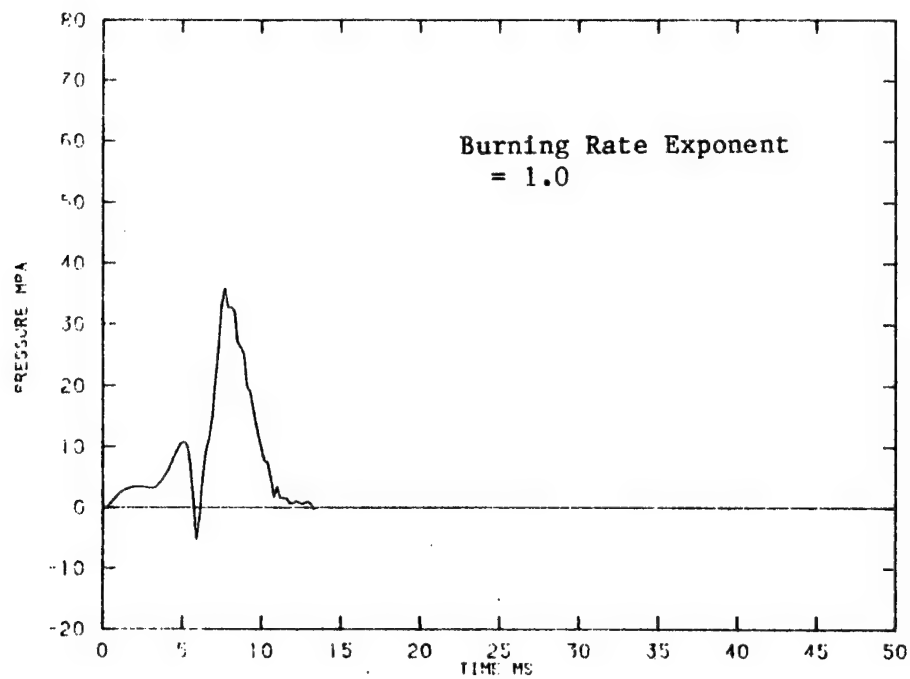
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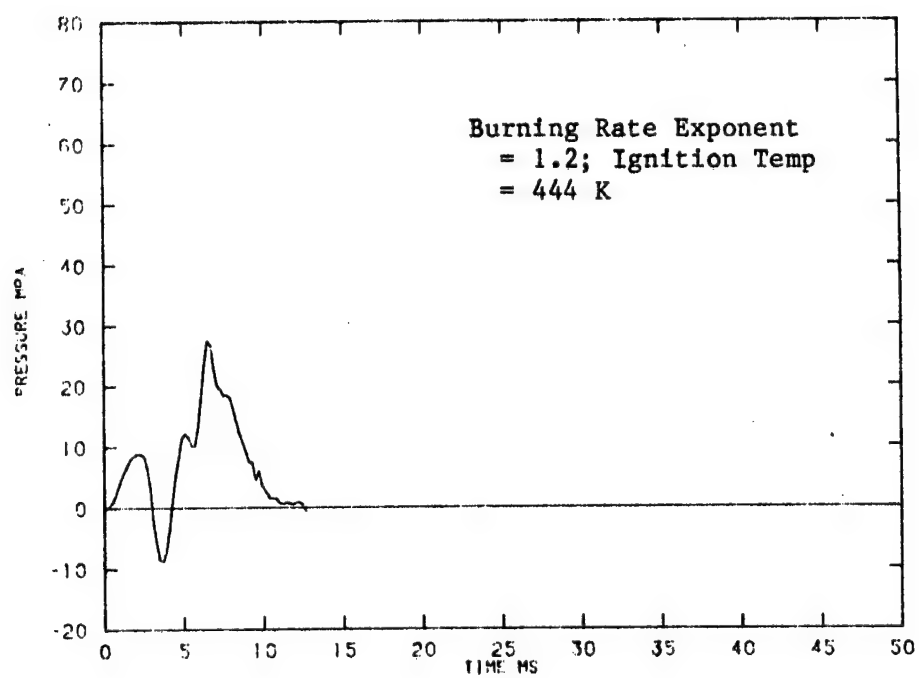
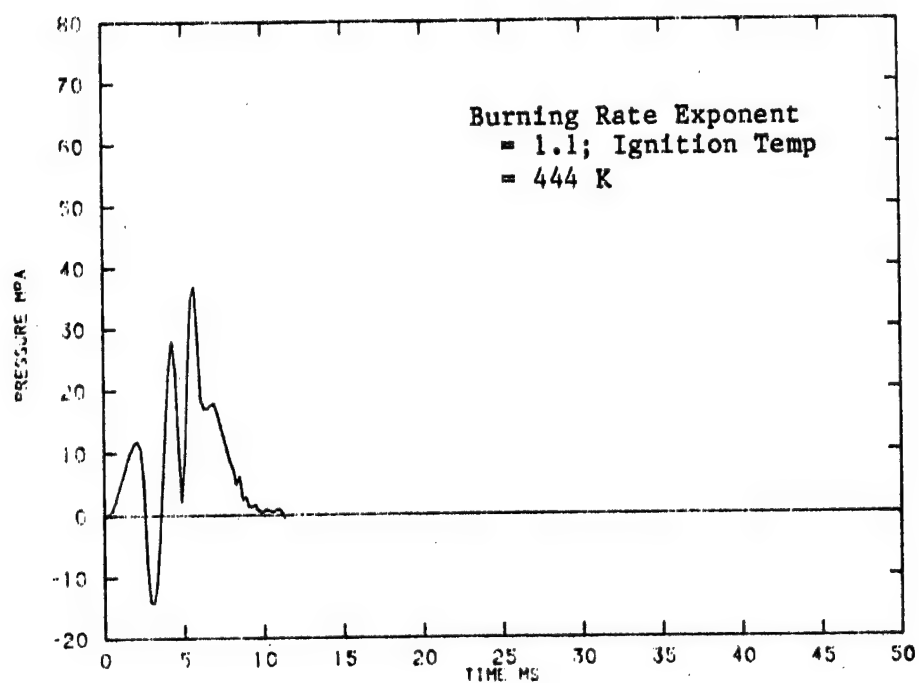


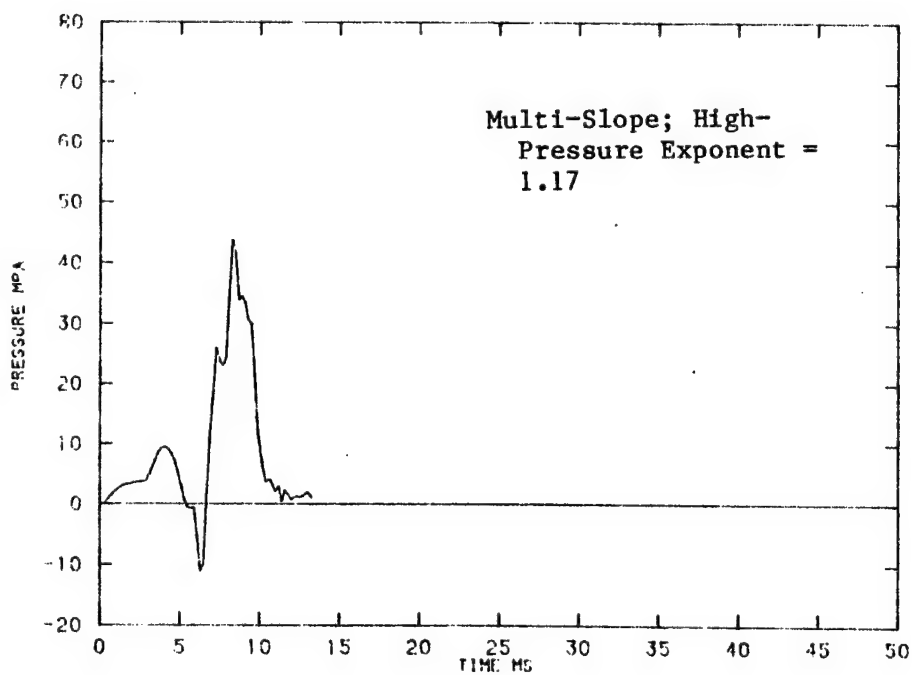
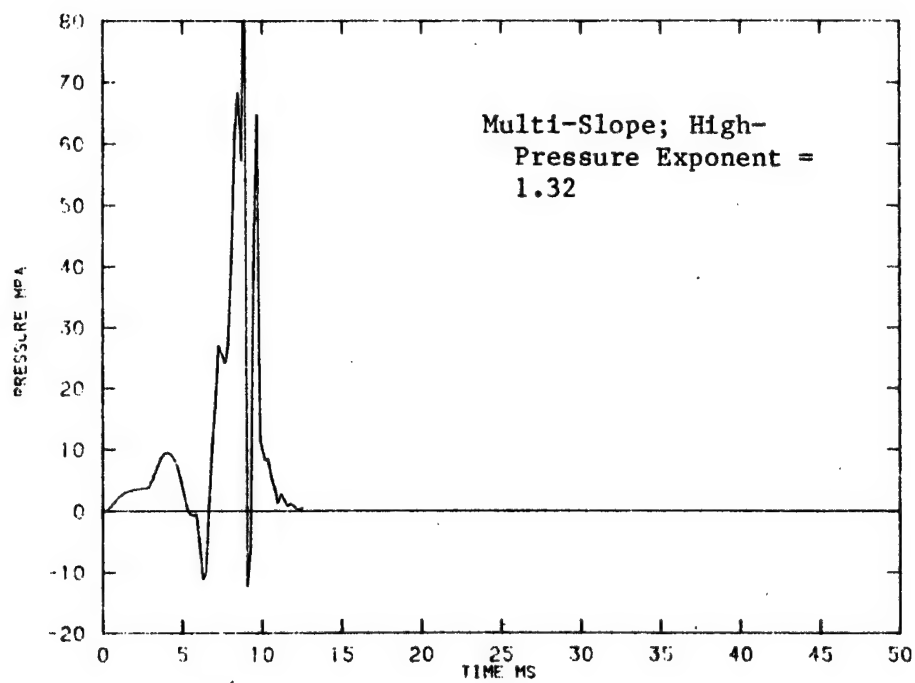


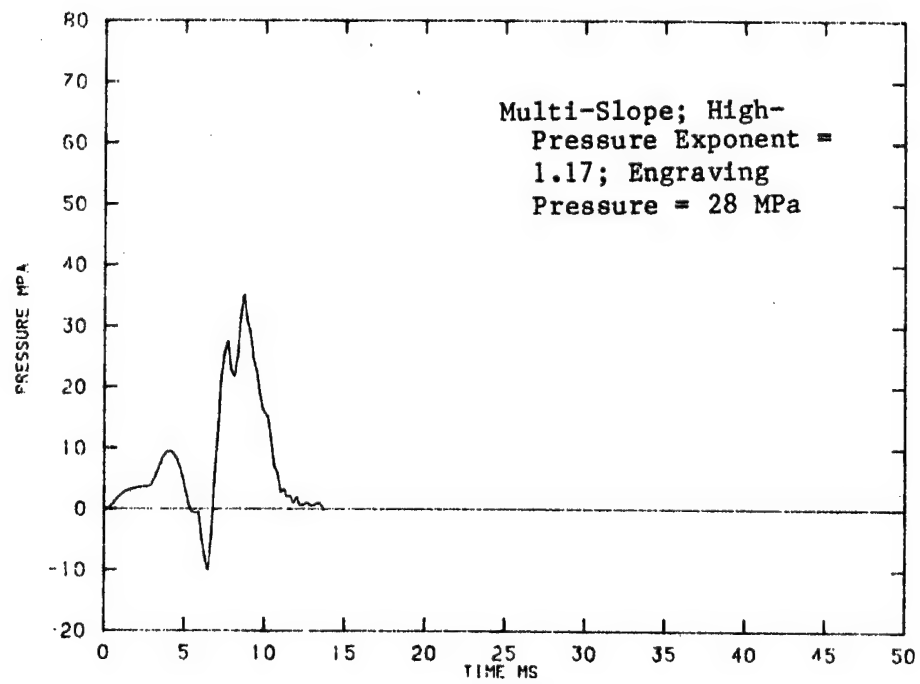
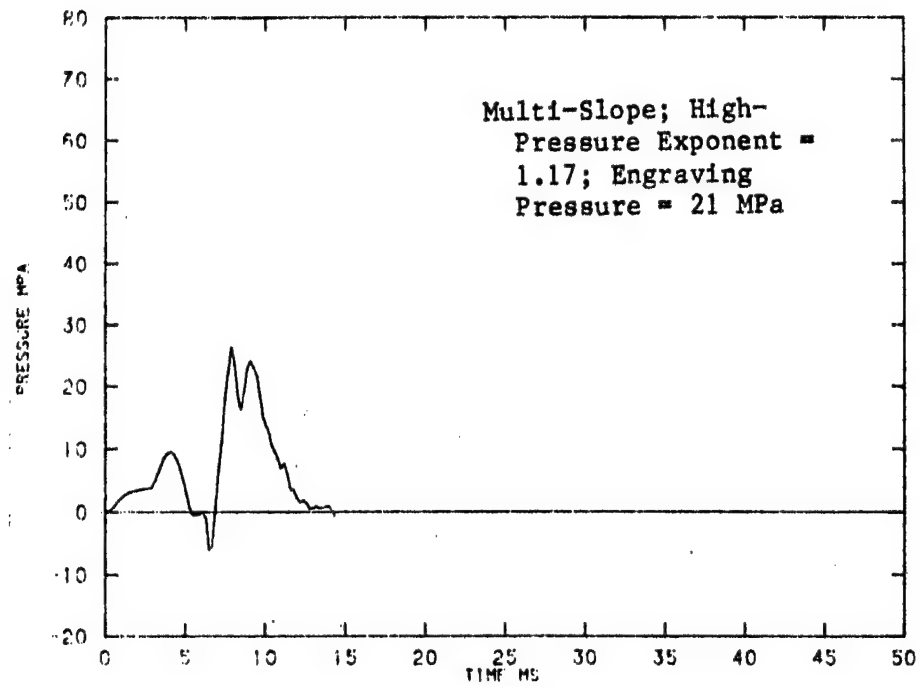


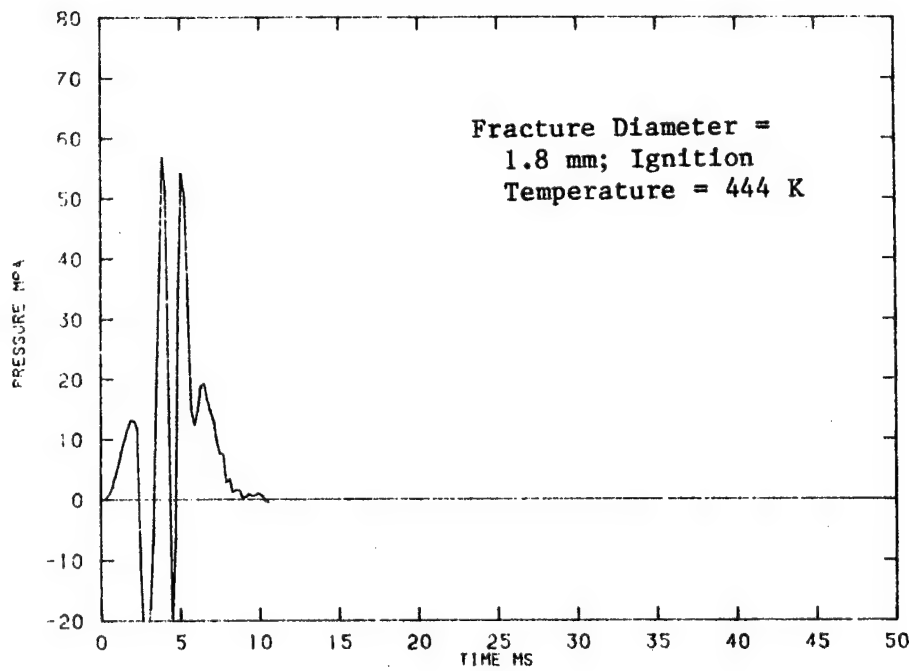
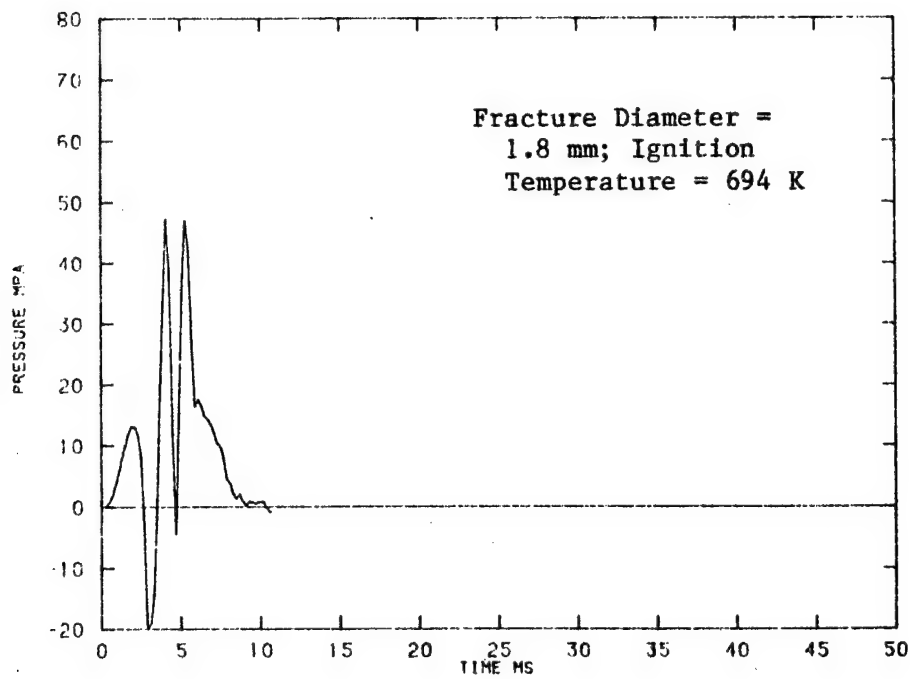


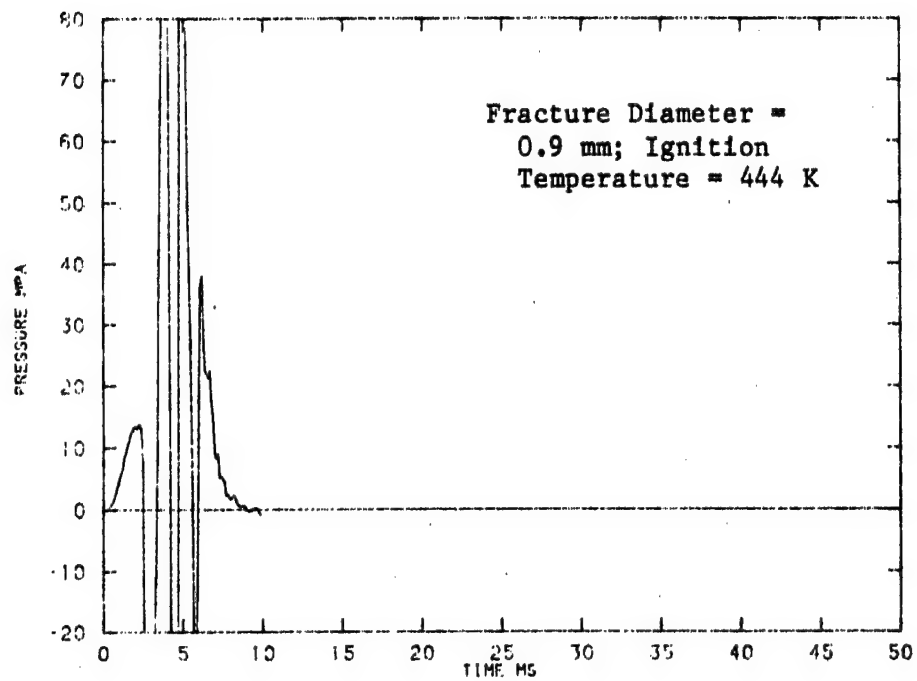












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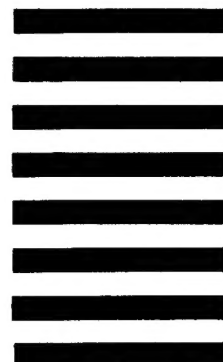


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